

Alexander



Taxi



Bridget
Jones 2



Ray

Entertainment

WEEKLY

#779/780

August 20/27, 2004

All
The
Buzz
On
135
New
Films!

**FALL
MOVIE
PREVIEW**

**JOHNNY
DEPP**
Is 'Finding
Neverland'
His Oscar
Movie?

PLUS >>

CE BY
LFIGER



Lemony Snicket



Alfie



Wimbledon



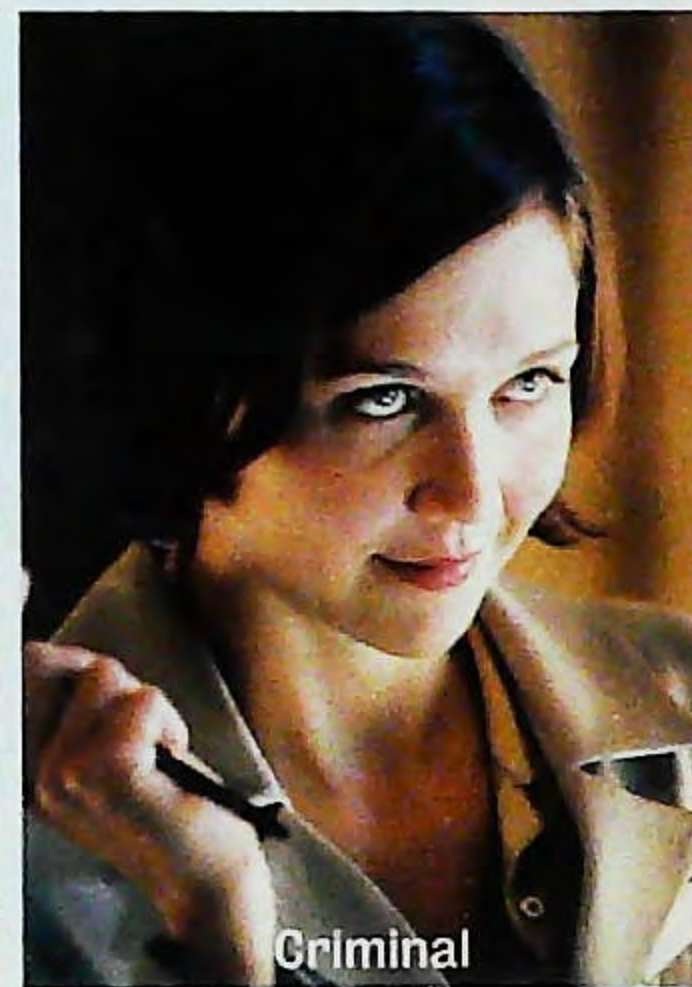
After the Sunset



Shall We Dance?



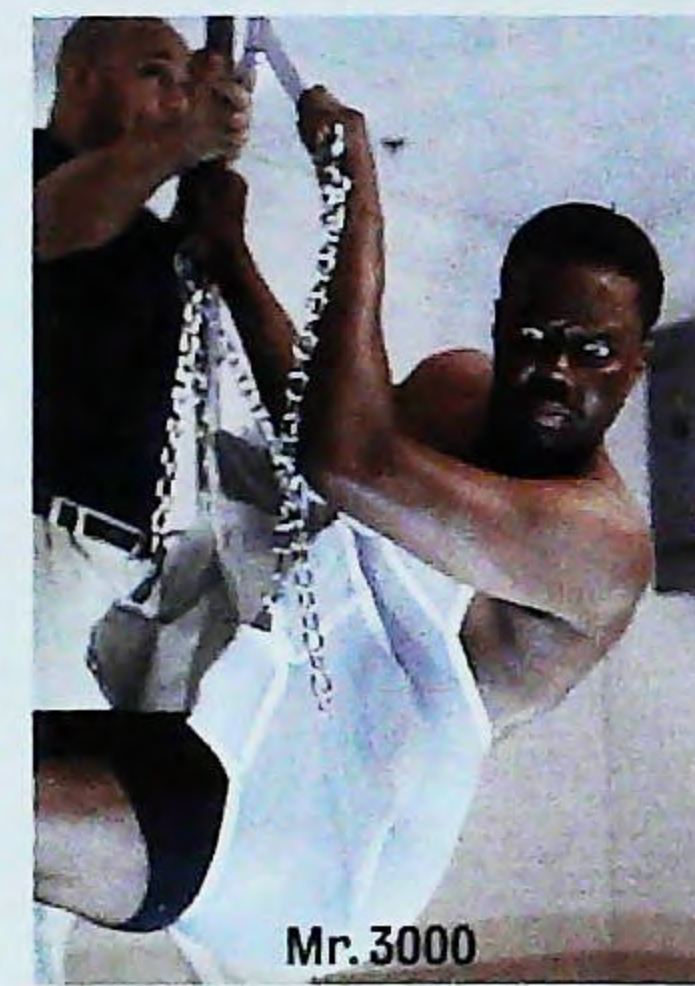
The Incredibles



Criminal



Closer



Mr. 3000



Vanity Fair



Meet the Fockers



The Life Aquatic



Shark Tale



The Aviator



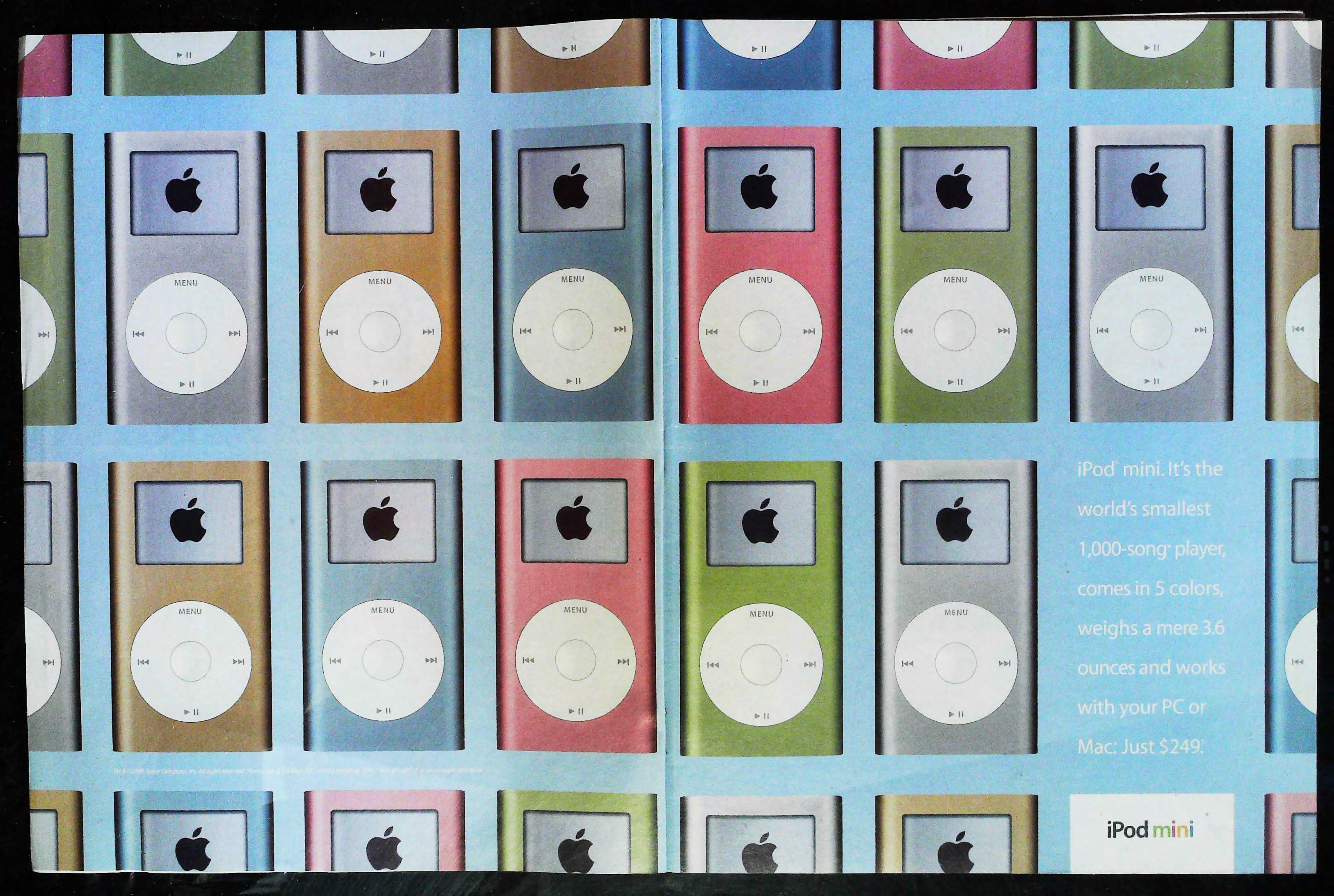
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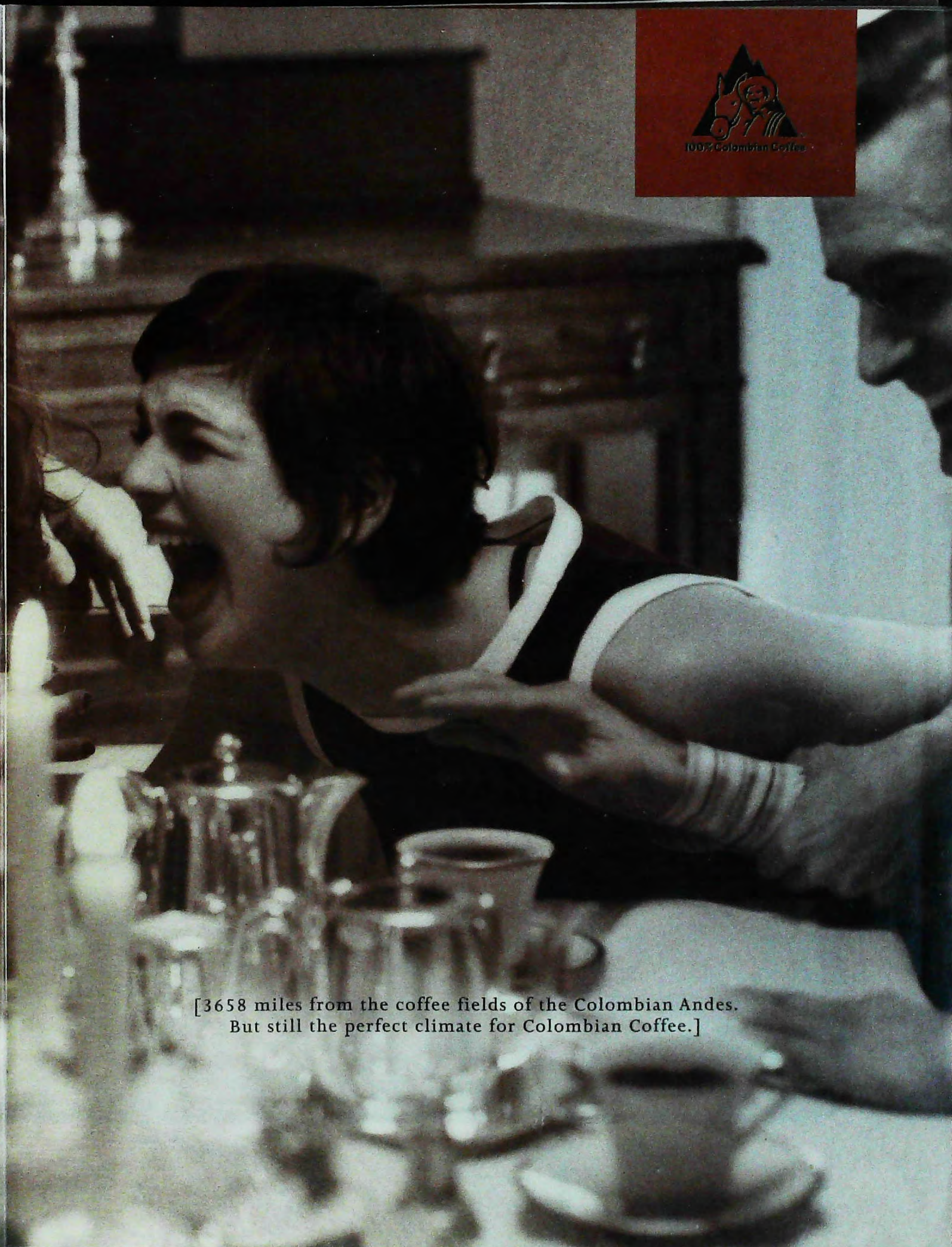
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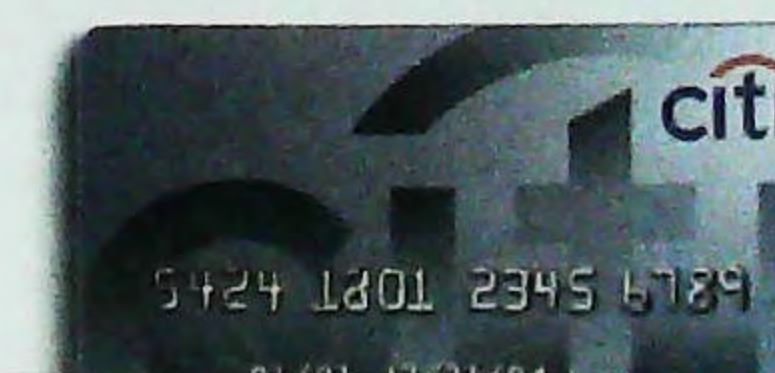
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News + Notes

16 | Funny Business

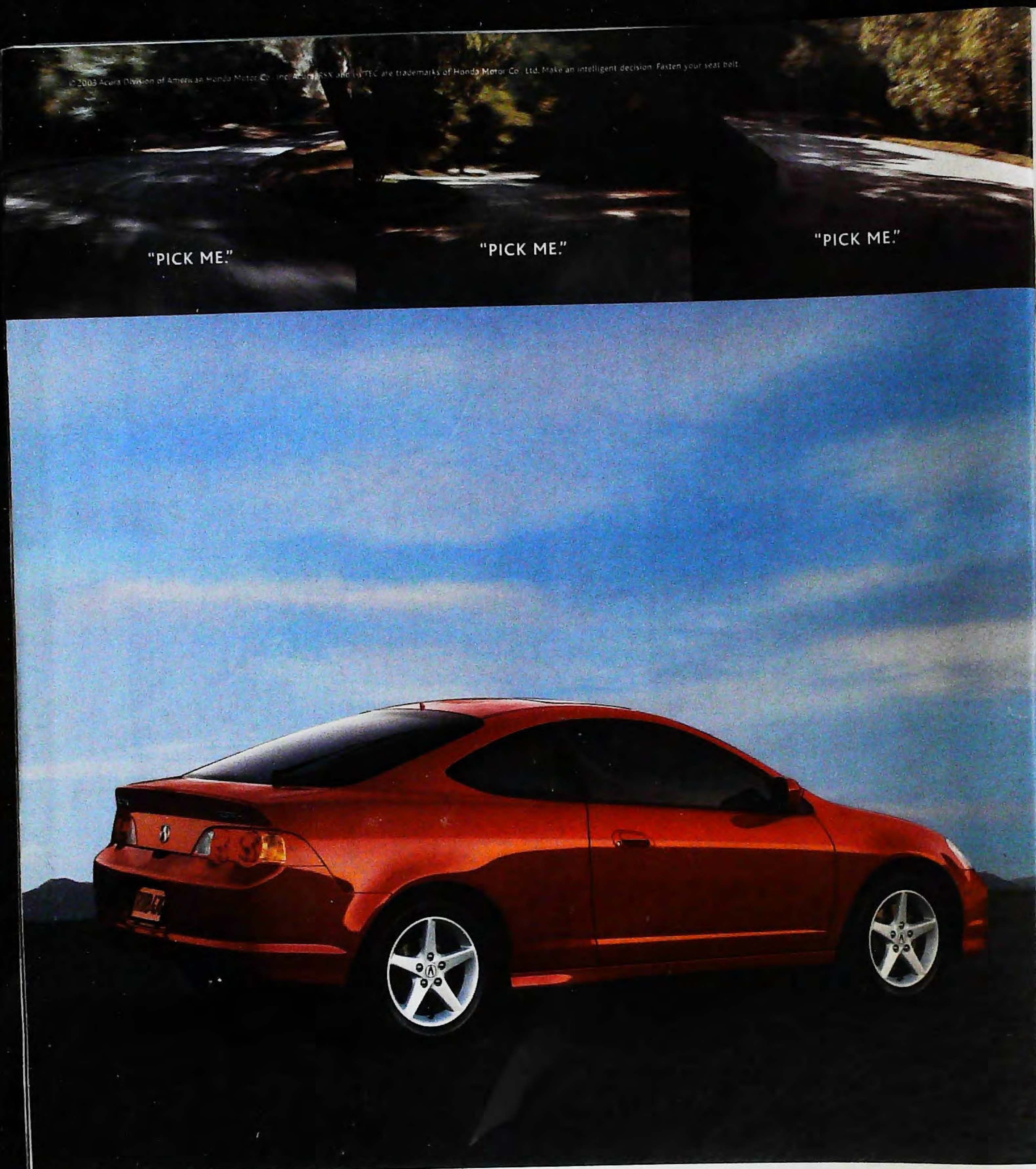
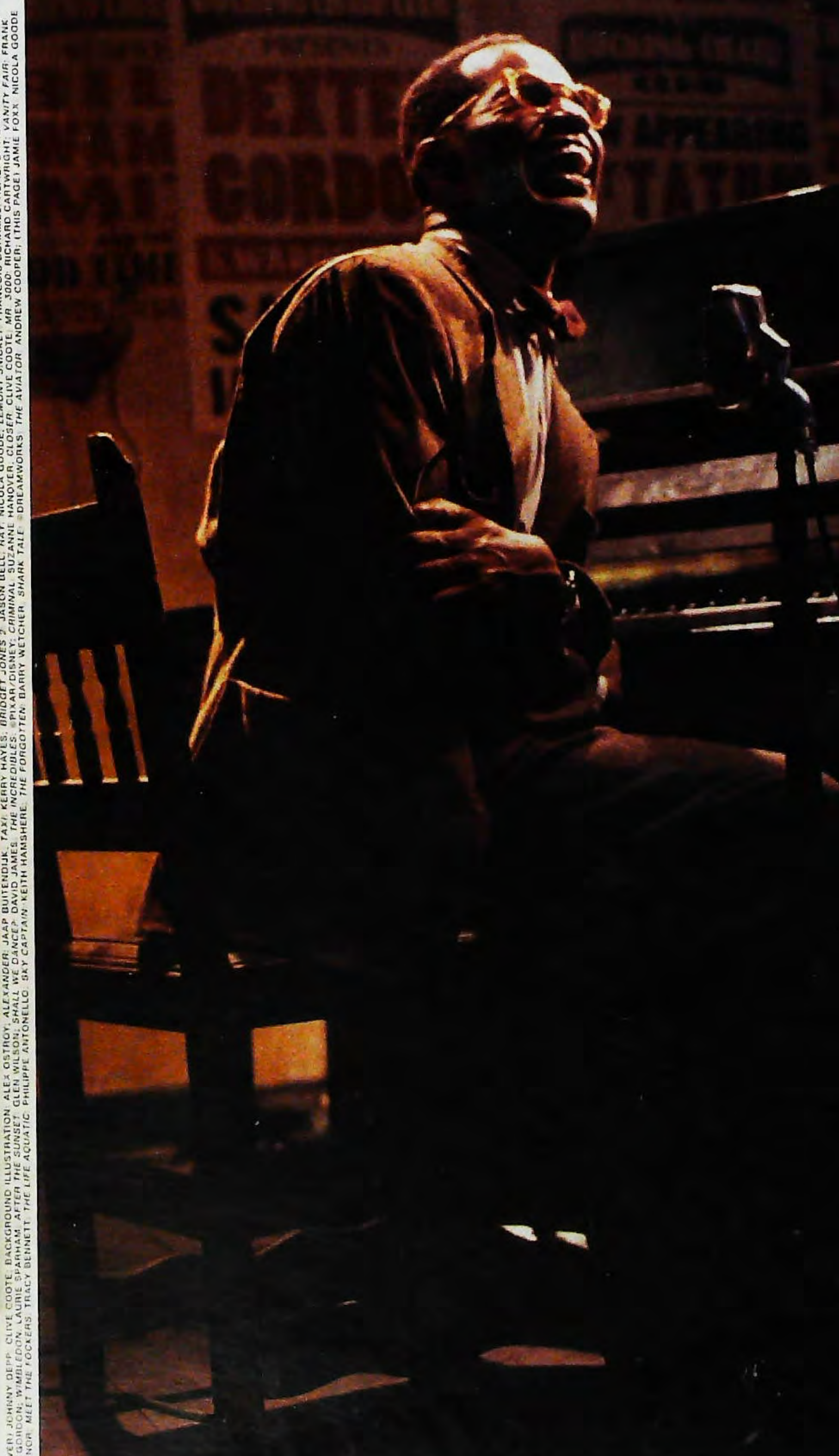
The unlikely power of Comedy Central...*The Village*'s not-so-secret ending...Hit List...The Deal Report...Legacy: Rick James...An EW Olympic Film Festival...*Sex and the City*'s fashionistas turn pitchwomen...Monitor.

Features

32 | Fall Movie Preview

EW's comprehensive guide to the season's newest releases, including: September Jude Law and Gwyneth Paltrow take off for a little sci-fi action in *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*; it's love-love for Paul Bettany and Kirsten Dunst in *Wimbledon*. October Jamie Foxx is the R&B legend in *Ray*; Will Smith, Jack Black, and Robert De Niro get animated in *Shrek*. November Johnny Depp discovers his inner Peter Pan in *Finding Neverland*; Colin Farrell and Angelina Jolie heat up Oliver Stone's *Alexander*. December Leonardo DiCaprio portrays the inscrutable Howard Hughes in Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator*; Jim Carrey brings Daniel Handler's novels to life in *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*; George Clooney's troublesome brat pack (including Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts) aim for new heists in *Ocean's Twelve*; Ben Stiller gets the family together (even Barbra Streisand!) to *Meet the Fockers*; Mike Nichols brings the stage hit *Close to the big screen*.

Mine eyes haven't seen the glory: Jamie Foxx wraps his arms around the soul groundbreaker in *Ray* (page 44)



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COVER: JONNY DEPP: CLIVE COOTE; BACKGROUNDS: ILLUSTRATION: ALEX GUSTOV; ALEXANDER: JAPAR BUTENDIJK; FAY: KERRY HAYES; BRIDGET JONES 2: JASON BELL; RAY: NICOLA GOODE; LEMONY SNICKET: FRANCIS DUHAMEL; ALFIE: DAVID APPLEBY & MELINDA; SUE GORDON: WIMBLEDON: LAUREN SPAID; MEET THE FOCKERS: JIM CARREY: JAMES HAMILTON; OCEAN'S TWELVE: JAMES HAMILTON; THE AVIATOR: ANDREW COOPER; THIS PAGE: JAMIE FOXX: NICOLA GOODE

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Entertainment WEEKLY

Reviews

99 | **Must List** Ten cool things to see/hear/read.

100 | **Movies** *Open Water*; also *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*, *Danny Deckchair*, *Mean Creek*, *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, *Bright Young Things*, *End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones*, and *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. Plus: Ask the Critic.

108 | **DVD & Video** Three Prince DVDs; also *Dogville*, *The Apple*, *The Cinema Sirens Collection*, *Happy Days*, *Laverne & Shirley*, *Sliders*, and *Mayor of the Sunset Strip*. Plus: *The Martin Scorsese Collection* and *We're Dyin' For...Picket Fences*.

113 | **Television** *All in the Family* and *Roseanne*; also Ask the Critic and Q&A with *Amish in the City's* Mose. Plus: What to Watch.

122 | **Music** R. Kelly's *Happy People/U Saved Me*; also Jason Mraz, *Mouse on Mars*, the Mooney Suzuki, and the latest in...reissues. Plus: Usher and Kanye West tour report.

129 | **Books** Lorraine Adams' *Harbor*; also David Benioff's *When the Nines Roll Over*, Tom Hart Dyke and Paul Winder's *The Cloud Garden*, and Denise Mina's *Deception*. Plus: From Our Staff, *Amped*.

14 | **Mail** Joaquin Phoenix.

134 | **The Pop of King** Stephen King on summer movies.

Aviator classes: Martin Scorsese (far left) charts the course with Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Beckinsale (page 74)



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Entertainment WEEKLY ONLINE

EXCLUSIVE
DAILY
CONTENT



REAL VS. REEL

How do you capture a life as colorful as Bobby Darin's? Kevin Spacey takes up the challenge with *Beyond the Sea* (Nov. 24), which condenses the croon-

er's story—a grave childhood illness, a rocky celebrity marriage, even an Oscar nod—into a couple hours. Read what makes the cut in this movie and seven others at ew.com/biopics.



EXTRA TV LISTINGS Want more advice on the shows and specials you should check out? Get an expanded version of What to Watch—now

Including a daily recommendation for what Olympic event to catch—at ew.com/whattowatch.



GARAGE ROCK 101 He's a wiseguy (on *The Sopranos*), but also a pretty wise guy: The E Street Band's Little Steven, with his syndicated radio show, has helped break

garage bands Jet and the Hives. Read his homage to the genre's finest at ew.com/garage.

TOP
FIVE
LIST!

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"I hope that soon people will say Joaquin Phoenix without something about River to go with it. He is his own actor."

DAYNA ANDERSON
Victoria, British Columbia

Golden Phoenix, Dark Night

THANK YOU FOR PUTTING Joaquin Phoenix on your cover! He is one of my faves and one of the most underrated actors. Anyone who doubts it should rent *Gladiator* and *Quills*. You will see two different people, both undeniably convincing. I hope that soon people will say Joaquin Phoenix without something about River to go with it. He is his own actor. Also, great article on *The Village*. M. Night and Joaq teamed up again? Boss. Very boss.

DAYNA ANDERSON

danderson1320@hotmail.com
Victoria, British Columbia

THE ONLY THING MORE ridiculous than the M. Night Shyamalan fever that has infected critics and audiences is the fact that he seems to be the prime perpetuator of said fever. He's a filmmaker so full of himself, his films cannot even begin to justify his own smugness. Not only do his movies play off as manipulative and as a pale Hitchcock/Spielberg imitation, they offend with the didactic air that Lisa Schwarzbaum speaks of in the same issue's Ask the Critic column.

C.J. ARELLANO

docbrown2015@cs.com
Tinley Park, Ill.

Fuse Control

THANK YOU FOR RECOGNIZING Fuse. As a member of the new generation of music listeners I find MTV useless. It's very sad that a music channel is considered unique simply because it plays music videos instead of reality shows. Fuse has introduced me to many new artists and my favorite band, the Rasmus. The amount of influence Fuse viewers have via the Web is the future of music television, with shows like *Dedicate Live* and *Oven Fresh*. The rebelliousness of Fuse is a breath of fresh air to a suffocating music industry.

SARAH QUALLS

persephone4226@hotmail.com
Victorville, Calif.

YES, YES, AND YES! I DO WANT my Fuse! I was so excited to finally see something written about *true* music television. I have been a huge fan of the network before it was even called Fuse (when it was Much Music USA). I can't think of a single show on Fuse that's not musically related and completely driven by it. They give you a taste of what is out there that MTV won't even consider. In my honest opinion, MTV does not hold the right to call themselves "music television" anymore. I grew up with MTV, and am dis-

appointed by what they have turned into. I willingly admit that I boycott MTV. I refuse to watch it. I have my Fuse—the *real* music television—and I won't turn back!

CASSANDRA BENSON

cassandranb_83@hotmail.com
Glendale, Ariz.

One Moore Time

BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE A subscription to EW in Singapore, I buy it each week at my local newsstand. The first thing I turn to is the letters page. Being 10,000 miles from my home in the U.S., I like that EW gives me a little bit of my own culture. The letters from the July 30 issue made me thankful that I don't have to face the bigotry and hatefulness of the people whose thoughts appear there. As a proud U.S. citizen, born and bred in Kansas, working in a job that supports the U.S. community here (including families of U.S. military personnel), and voting absentee at every opportunity, I am constantly amazed by the uninformed and inarticulate people who are represented in the letters published. Often they provide a good laugh, but the letters from that issue were astonishing in their pure hatred and immaturity. To focus on Michael Moore's size rather than his thoughts, to state that the facts in his film *Fahrenheit 9/11* are dubious without offering any substantiation (especially when almost all his information is in the public domain), and finally

to be so childlike as to declare that one would vote for President Bush just to spite Moore is beyond comprehension.

KIRK PALMER

kmpalmer51@yahoo.com.sg
Singapore

In the Line of Fire

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SHORT-SIGHTED and vulgar as to create a list of best movie quotes of the last 50 years? Great lines are for advertisements and politicians. As someone who loves and studies film, I'm appalled that you'd be so apathetic to the writers of the lines, who created the contexts in which the lines are spoken. Cutting the line off from the movie and pasting it in black and white is like saying "To be or not to be" is all that is worth knowing from *Hamlet*, even though it isn't a complete thought. It's one thing to make lists of great movies, but those who haven't seen these films are going to be lost when they read the quotes in your article, and they aren't going to run out and buy a film if they think you've told them the only part worth knowing. How can people respect movies if the ones considered the best can be summed up in one line? Your article doesn't celebrate great films and screenwriters, it betrays them.

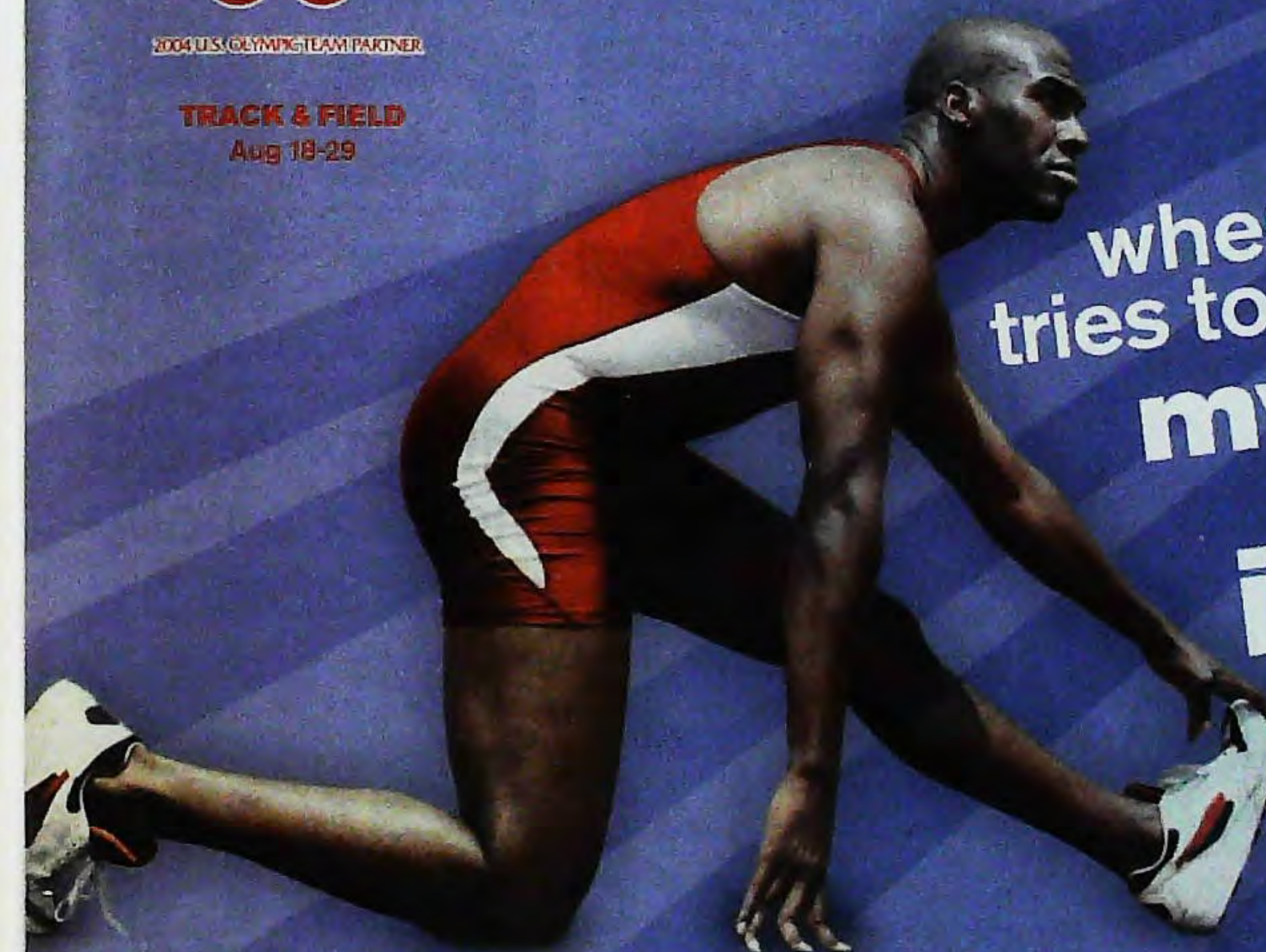
J.M. SIMPKINS

scarletprojectionist@yahoo.com
Worcester, Mass.

CORRECTION: *Rapper Nelly made his film acting debut in 2002's Snipes (Music).*

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NEWS

notes

08/20/04

COMEDY CENTRAL

Dave Chappelle and crew shoot...Comedy Central scores! by Allison Hope Weiner

Funny Business

REMEMBER WHEN COMEDY CENTRAL was a joke? When the cable channel's biggest draws—its only draws, really—were *Benny Hill* reruns and stand-up comics making airplane-food jokes in front of the Improv's redbrick wall?

Look who's laughing now. Nearly 14 years after the inauspicious merger of HBO's Comedy Channel and Viacom's HA!, Comedy Central has the hottest profile of any network on cable. In a universe that measures audiences in hundreds of thousands rather than the networks' tens of millions, it has launched more careers than any of its basic-cable neighbors, providing the most nurturing environment for comedy's most daring minds. Earlier this month, Comedy Central made headlines by signing Dave Chappelle to two more years in an astonishing deal potentially worth upwards of \$50 million. Last week, a fellow named Bill Clinton guested on

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT RISCO

The Daily Show With Jon Stewart, a faux newscast that's must-do TV for politicians of every party. And, oh yes, it got higher ratings than all the real cable news channels during the Democratic convention.

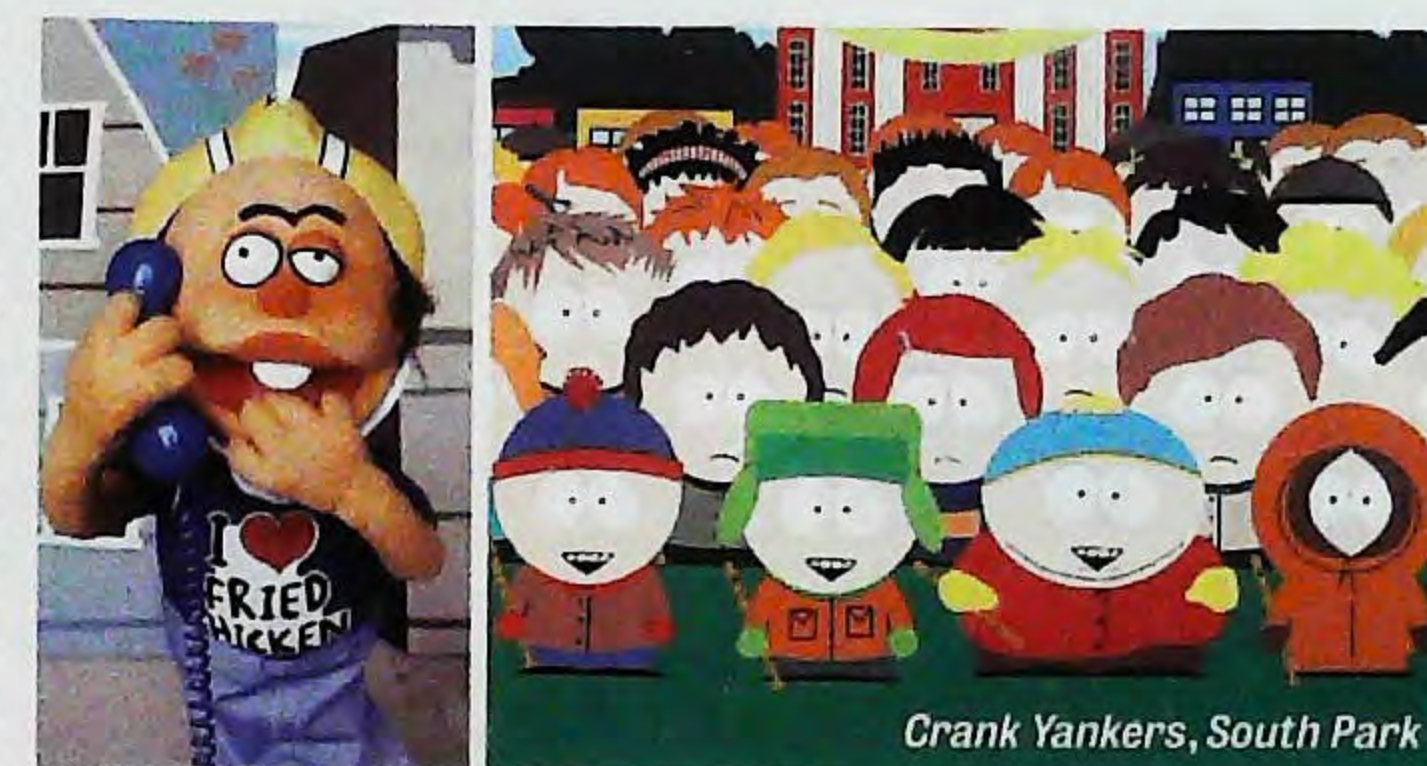
Maturity was a long time coming. In 2002, the network lost *Saturday Night Live* reruns—its biggest draw for years—to E! And up until *Chappelle's Show* began in 2003, the net seemed incapable of developing a companion for its highest-rated original series, *South Park*—the groundbreaking 'toon that put Comedy Central on the map in 1997 (not to mention in the green, with toy tie-ins, DVDs, a feature film, and a syndication deal).

But these days, this channel rules—at least with young men (*Chappelle's Show* is the top-rated program in its time slot for men 18–34), and that makes for an attractive bottom line. “Comedy Central is an alternative for us to reach young males outside of sports,” says Laura Caraccioli-Davis, senior VP for Starcom Entertainment. And even when the net doesn't pull in more viewers than, say, *Saturday Night Live* (which averages 3.7 million), it beats its competitors with buzz—though sometimes the payoff can take a while: “There were advertisers who felt *Chappelle's* wasn't right for them,” admits Lauren Corrao, Comedy Central's senior VP of original programming. “But when they saw the ratings [*Chappelle's* averages 3.1 million viewers], they came around. It's more difficult when you're starting up a show with that brand of comedy. But we'd do it again.”

Which is why the talent sticks around. Viacom-owned Comedy Central may be the last bastion of subversive—or just tasteless—humor left on TV. “We're doing things the networks aren't,” says Comedy Central president Doug Herzog. “Everything that has succeeded came from a distinctive point of view. It's not watered down by network development people. Our approach is to break rules.”

Breaking rules can take many forms, including, well, incest. The recently canceled *Man Show* had a bit called “Oedipal Fun,” based on the notion that every guy wants a girl like Mom, so...Adam Carolla dated his mom and they ended up kissing in bed. “It was an appalling piece,” says *Man Show* exec producer Daniel Kellison. “Even Jimmy [Kimmel] wasn't sure we should do it, but they let us.”

But breaking rules can also produce *The*



Crank Yankers, South Park

Daily Show's brilliant satire—equally revered by urbane politicians and high-GPA frat boys. And it's hard to imagine Chappelle's skit about Mandela's boot camp for teens on any broadcast net. “Comparing Comedy Central to the networks is ridiculous. They don't have to worry about shows that appeal to [everyone],” says one network exec. “We heard about Chappelle long before Comedy Central, but we couldn't put him on network TV.”

And that makes Comedy Central all the

more essential. “They're remarkably permissive,” says Kellison, who also exec-produces *Crank Yankers*. “I'm not sure they even realize what happened with Janet Jackson. We seem to do whatever we've always done. Their audience expects that; they don't want to be namby-pamby. As much as things have changed across television, Comedy Central continues to glide under the radar.”

Up next: *Drawn Together*, a raunchy animated “reality” series by Matt Silverstein and Dave Jeser (*Andy Richter Controls the Universe*), due in October. “We had [network] offers for more money, but we took a pay cut and came here because we didn't want our show changed,” says Jeser. Oh, come on! Surely that's not the reason. Okay, concedes Jeser: “When I saw ‘Mr. Hankey: The Christmas Poo’ episode [of *South Park*], where they had a singing piece of doody, I realized this is where we should be working.” ■



Kevin Connolly and Piven on *Entourage*

JEREMY PIVEN: AGENT PROVOCATIVE

JEREMY PIVEN HAS MADE A career out of dorky sidekicks (*Serendipity*) and fast-talking jerks (*Old School*). But he steals the spotlight in HBO's *Entourage* as Hollywood shark Ari Gold. The role marks a promising return to TV for the former *Ellen* regular, who won critics' hearts but struck out with viewers



as a leading man (albeit one who thinks he's the god of love) in 1998's short-lived ABC dramedy *Cupid*. EW chatted with Piven about heading back to TV...as an agent. —Jennifer Armstrong

Word is your character is loosely based on series exec producer Mark Wahlberg's

HitList

by Dalton Ross

1 SHREK 2 OUT ON DVD SAME DAY THAT PIXAR'S THE INCREDIBLES HITS THEATERS This is a tough one, kids. You might want to begin begging your parents starting right...NOW!

2 JESSICA SIMPSON TO PLAY NFL'S KICKOFF CON-CERT So, basically the NFL has traded an exposed breast for a "stinky ass." That makes sense.

3 THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2: ROYAL ENGAGEMENT OPENS Dear diary, I sorta want to catch this teen chick flick, but I'm not a teen, and I'm not a chick. So my interest could be seen as a bit creepy. For the love of Anne Hathaway, what to do?!!?



HALLE BERRY SAYS SHE'S INTERESTED IN MAKING A CATWOMAN SEQUEL

Is this some sort of wacky nine lives thing? Because if so, we are all in *serious* trouble.

5 JANET JACKSON TO GUEST-STAR ON WILL & GRACE We would say the "stinky ass" was busy, but that brings up all sorts of disturbing images.

6 SEINFELD COMING TO DVD Included are deleted scenes, bloopers, an alternate version of the pilot, and cast commentaries—which is a lot of somethings for a show about nothing.

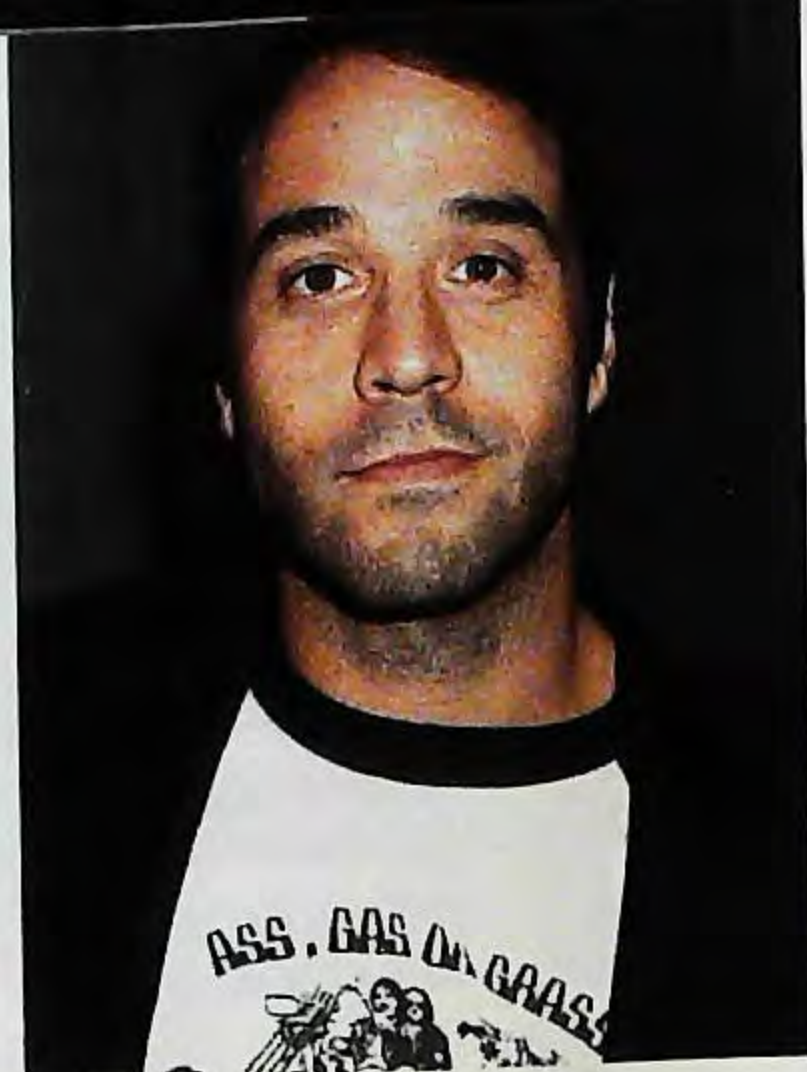
7 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN LEADS TOUR TO UNSEAT PREZ BUSH Apparently New Jersey's Boss doesn't like the country's big boss man. How early-'90s professional wrestling powerhouse the Big Boss Man (best known for something called the "Boss Man Slam") feels about all of this remains unclear.

8 JACK BAUER TO GET A GIRLFRIEND ON 24 At least until she gets amnesia, *forgets* she's his girlfriend, ends up caught in a bear trap, and generally just starts to unravel at about hour 15.

9 OPRAH SIGNS ON THROUGH 2011 She deserves it.

10 PARIS HILTON'S HOME ROBBED She deser...oh, we kid 'cause we love. But not really.

agent, Ari Emanuel. I want to make this very clear: This character is *not* a depiction of Ari Emanuel. You take the strangest and the best and the worst from all [Hollywood players] to create this beast.... [The character] Ari is this angel/devil who can tear you apart in one moment and the next just celebrate you.



What will we learn about him this season? We explore his home life...and things at home are different from what you'd expect. He's married, and her name is Mrs. Ari—she insists on being called Mrs. Ari. They have kids.

The show has had cameos from the likes of Jessica Alba, All Larter, and Luke Wilson. Any good upcoming appearances? Larry David plays himself as one of my clients, and that was one of the best days of my life. Going toe-to-toe with that freak was fantastic. I love to improvise, and the script just said, like, "Larry David's here and it's time

to begin the scene." He'd just throw out a couple of ideas...and then it's just game on, man.

Have you gotten any feedback from real agents about Ari? Every once in a while if I run into an agent, I can see that they feel like I've touched upon something they recognize. That's gratifying to me—it's good to be recognized by the world we're depicting.

How does your agent feel about it? You know what's so unbelievably ironic? I don't have an agent. I'm between agents. I don't have an agent, I don't have a girlfriend, and I don't have an entourage. ■

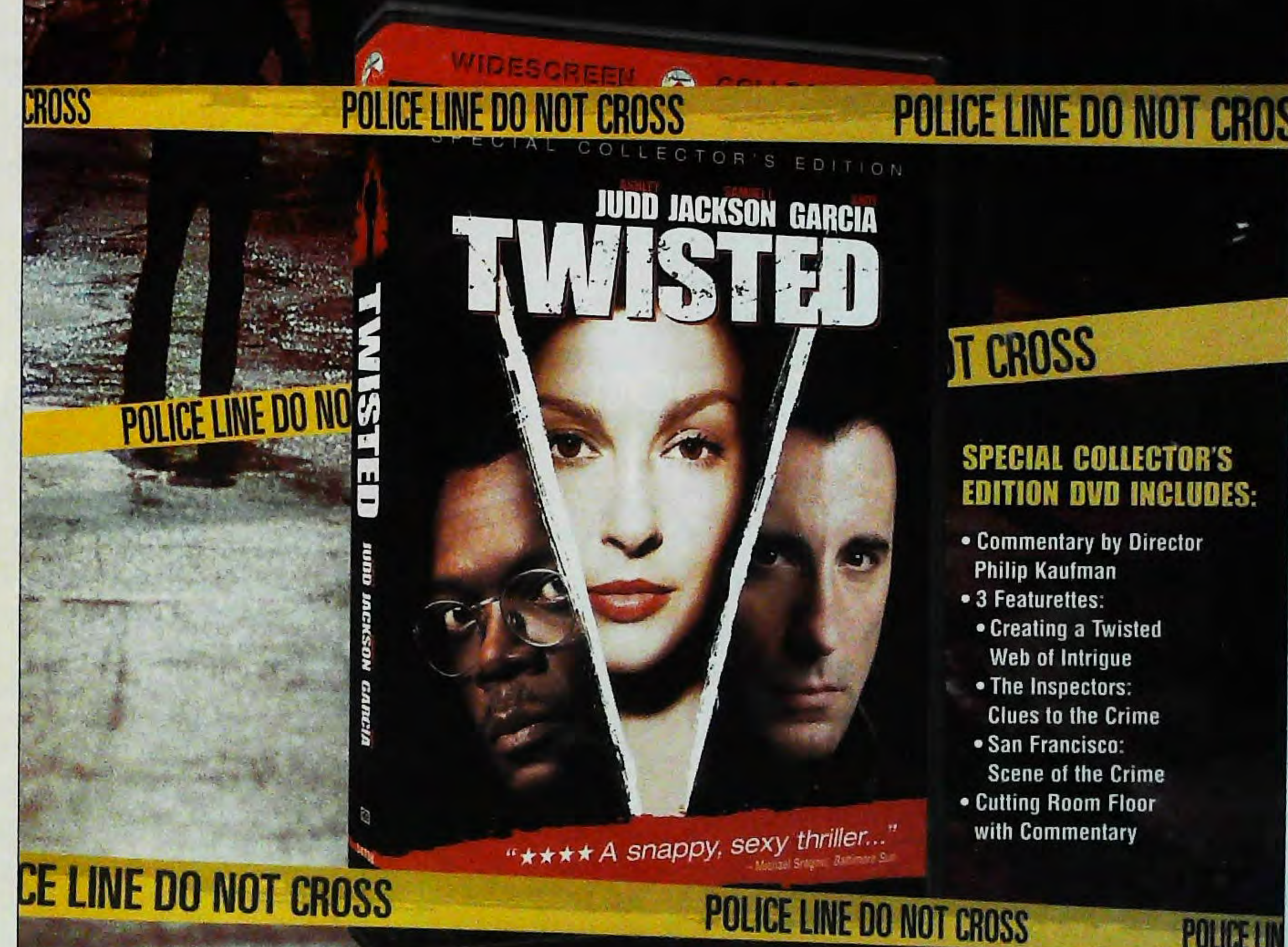
LOYAL SUBJECT

If Hector Elizondo's kindly bodyguard in *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement* strikes you as familiar—and we don't mean because he played the same part in *PD1*, silly—you're onto something. The actor has appeared (usually as a kindly manservant of some sort) in every one of director Garry Marshall's 14 films. Elizondo and the *Pretty Woman* and *Beaches* helmer have been, excuse us, the wind beneath each other's wings since meeting at a basketball game in the early '80s. In fact, Elizondo (the director's "lucky charm") is written into all of Marshall's contracts "whether I want to do the movie or not," the actor says, laughing. Quips Marshall of his reliable friend, "it's not that he can do so many different characters. It's that he has so many toupees!" —Michelle Kung



Anne Hathaway and Elizondo in *Princess*

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The Deal Report BY GREGORY KIRSCHLING



VETRINI

TELEVISION Just as he once belted out those funny "An-geh-lah"s and "Saa-man-tahh"s on *Who's the Boss?*, now Tony Danza will have a new one: "Errr-eh-kahl!" Erika Vetrini, the *Apprentice* castoff who tangled with Omarosa, will be his new sidekick on *The Tony Danza Show*, his syndicated gabfest beginning Sept. 13. "They describe me as a female alter ego, not a cohost,"

explains Vetrini, who'll have a "back-and-forth" with Danza at the top of each show and report from red carpets and stuff like that. This is like when Elisabeth Hasselbeck went from *Survivor 2* to *The View*, and—wait a minute—Erika and Elisabeth actually were at Boston College together! Vetrini says she hasn't asked Hasselbeck for showbiz advice yet: "I saw her at a wedding recently, but I didn't get into it. I think when you're with friends, you don't really want to talk business, you know?" Trump has taught her well.... Director Jim Sheridan is teaming up with his daughter and *In America* coscreenwriter Naomi to create an NBC dramedy pilot called *Three Brothers*. "It's about an Irish father, who's not me, who comes over to America and opens an Irish restaurant, which doesn't work," he explains.

"So he changes it to an Italian restaurant." That sounds quirky. "It's something like *Northern Exposure*," says Sheridan, who's working on two films: One's about "an American political family," the other's about "growing up in Dublin."

MOVIES We hate them already: Ralph Fiennes will play the villainous Voldemort in the *Goblet of Fire* Harry Potter movie, and Matt Dillon, forever the Flamingo Kid, will play the bad guy in *Herbie: Fully Loaded*, the *Love Bug* update costarring Lindsay Lohan.

VIDEOGAMES Forget commercials in Japan: Cool famous people love to do videogames these days. Collin Farrell is expected to talk in his Alexander the Great voice for the PC version of his November Oliver Stone epic. And the first-person shooter *Area 51*, based on that old Midway game about aliens, will feature David Duchovny as the hero and—ha ha ha—Marilyn Manson as the mysterious alien guide. (Additional reporting by Geoff Keighley)



DILLON



MANSON



Bryce Dallas Howard
in *The Village*

Spoiling Point

The Village's secret doesn't last long

SPOILER ALERT...NOT! M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village* was in theaters for just one week before its twist ending was divulged in national newspapers. On Aug. 6, reports circulated that the movie's plot bears a curious resemblance to that of a young adult novel by Margaret Peterson Haddix. *Running Out of Time* features a tomboyish girl who leaves her isolated 19th-century village in search of medicine, and, well, let's just say she gets a surprise. Haddix says she and publisher Simon & Schuster are "weighing our options" in pursuing legal action (in the meantime, the 1995 novel is now featured on the front page of the Simon & Schuster kids website). A statement from the Walt Disney Co. and Shyamalan's Blinding Edge Pictures called any claims of plagiarism "meritless."

Either way, word is out. And folks behind *The Village* can't be



pleased; movies featuring such narrative tricks depend on tight lips. Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) earned \$294 million thanks to the well-kept secret that Bruce Willis' character was dead all

along. *The Crying Game* (1992) grew into a hit as most kept mum on its surprise—until Miramax campaigned for leading lady Jaye Davidson to land a Best Supporting Actor Oscar. Even



Alfred Hitchcock famously instructed theaters not to admit latecomers to 1960's *Psycho* (left) in order to build buzz for its shocker—that star Janet Leigh is killed early on.

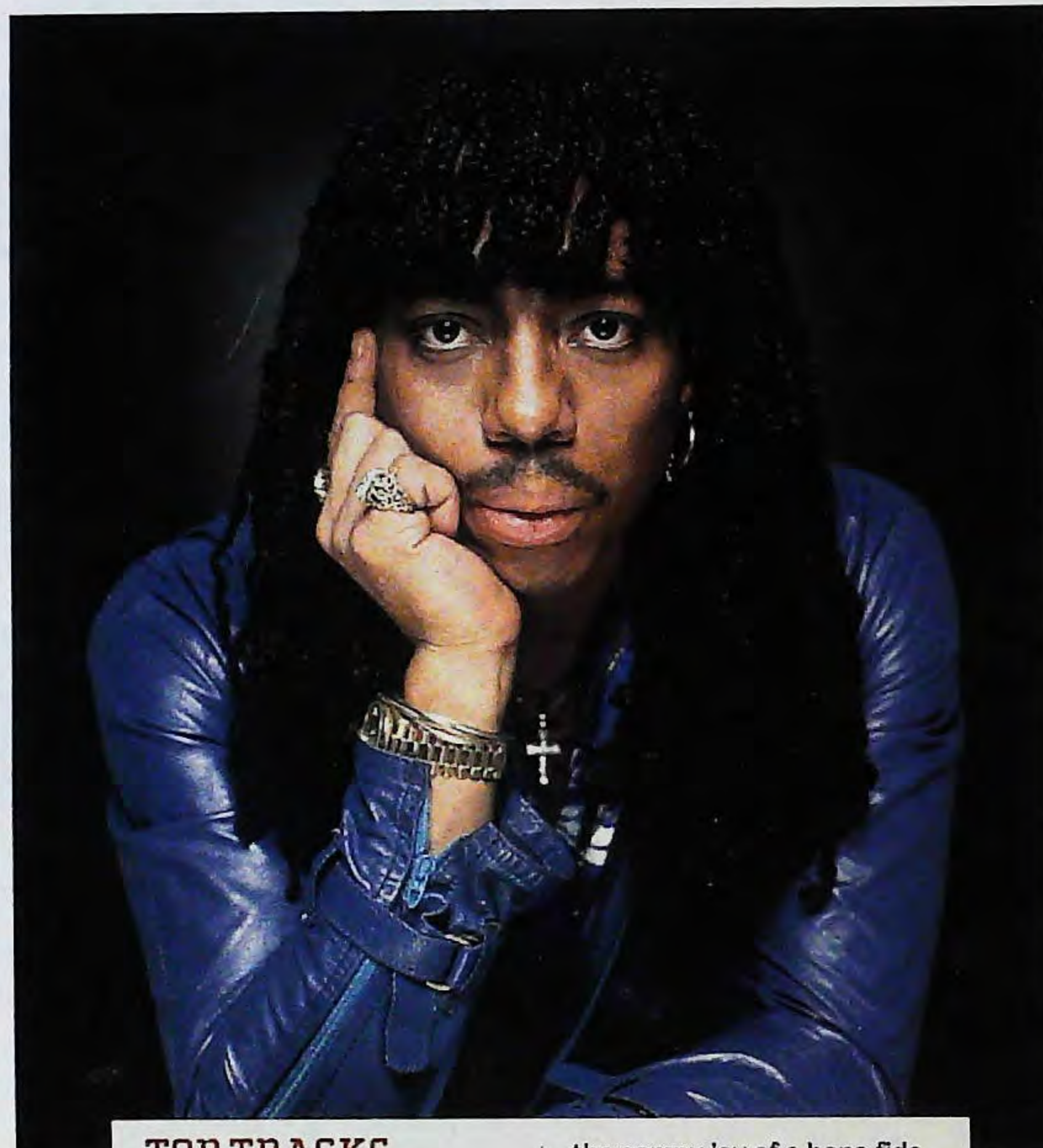
But *The Village*'s real twist may be the one at the box office. (See chart on page 107.) Bad reviews and worse word of mouth are keeping many viewers away from Shyamalan's monster melodrama altogether. Scary. —Gilbert Cruz and Joshua Rich

Legacy RICK JAMES 1948-2004

Funk, Fire, and Desire

IF GEORGE CLINTON IS funk's intergalactic architect, and Prince its crossover musical prodigy, then Rick James, who died Aug. 6 of heart failure in his L.A. home at age 56, was the genre's flashy, carnal embodiment of rock & roll excess. A formidable talent who wrote and produced a string of indelible post-disco R&B classics like "Super Freak" and "Give It to Me Baby," James enjoyed a brilliant moment of success in the late '70s and early '80s before being swallowed by a cocaine addiction that all but ruined his life and career. "Rick was a troubled soul but an amazing talent," says his former Motown labelmate Lionel Richie. "I will miss him."

When he debuted on the scene back in 1978, James (born James Johnson Jr.) invoked the cross-pollination of rock and soul that Sly Stone had pioneered a decade earlier, fusing his lascivious lyrics and rebellious spirit to craft a style that came to be known as punk-funk. With glittery braids and ostentatious leather duds, he seemed an unlikely candidate for mainstream success. But by positioning himself between genres, the R&B Bacchus was able to sell his electro-rock jams to a wider audience than most of his funky brethren. "Rick achieved what at the time P-Funk could not, and that was to cross over to the white audience and get major airplay and video play," says Bootsy Collins, the Parliament Funkadelic bassist. "So it can be said



TOP TRACKS

"Mary Jane" (1978) A breezy love jam or a not-so-veiled love letter to marijuana? Your pick!
 "Give It to Me Baby" (1981) The inspiration for "Thriller." And, dare we say, even better.
 "Super Freak" (1981) Oh,

that Rick took funk into the unfunky homes of white America."

James' early-'80s success made him a rich man, but it also magnified his demons. "You smoke a joint and write a song and next thing you know you've got a check in the mail," he said in 1981.

"Rick and I were very good friends at one time," says Chic guitarist and famed producer

the campy joy of a bona fide pop-funk masterwork.

"Fire and Desire" (1981) James + Teena Marie = an epic quiet-storm scorcher!
 "Cold Blooded" (1983) The Neptunes wish they'd written this sparse, sex-drenched dance cut.

Nile Rodgers. "And hanging out with him was the same as hanging out with Joey Ramone. He lived the punk-funk life." Before long, James was squandering his wealth to support an \$8,000-a-week cocaine habit. By the end of the decade, he was practically a recluse, consumed in a dark underworld of debauchery where parties lasted weeks at a time. It

got worse: In 1991, he and future wife Tanya Hijazi (now divorced) were charged with assaulting and falsely imprisoning two women in separate incidents, with James being found guilty of assault and spending nearly three years in jail (Hijazi copped a plea and served 18 months).

The newly sober James attempted a comeback with a 1997 album (derailed by a 1998 stroke and hip replacement surgery), but it wasn't until recently that he reclaimed cultural relevance, thanks to Dave Chappelle, whose over-the-top impersonation of the '70s James on his top-rated Comedy Central show hatched the undisputed catchphrase of the year: "I'm Rick James, bitch!" A party companion of Chappelle's Show regular Charlie Murphy (Eddie's brother) back in the day, James gamely appeared in the sketches,

offering amused, rambling accounts of his once wicked, wicked ways: "Cocaine is a helluva drug!"

Despite his prolonged absence from pop music, James' impact lives on in the magnetic swagger of 21st-century soul rocker Andre 3000 and scores of sample-happy hip-hop artists tapping his juicy tracks for sure-fire hits (J. Lo, Jay-Z, Mary J. Blige). "He's got the thing that makes all the hair stand up on the back of your neck," says Blige. And his upcoming memoir, *Confessions of a Super Freak*, should keep him alive for fans. The front-runner to play him in the screen version? Dave Chappelle. —Raymond Fiere

Bob Finkeldorf
Meghan Freeberg
Kevin French

Toniann Frittenelli
Eric Frye
Gina Fuccio

GO BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL
WITHOUT REALLY
GOING BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL.
BACK TO SCHOOL MOVIE MARATHON
SUNDAY, AUGUST 29th

12 pm Lucas
2 pm Some Kind of Wonderful
4 pm Sixteen Candles
6 pm The Breakfast Club
8 pm Grease

WHY MOVIE LOVERS CUT CLASS



All times ET/PT



Beyond Borders

Immigration becomes reality-show fodder

REALITY SHOWS AND POOR taste? You ain't seen nothin' yet. On the unscripted cable show *Gana la Verde* (Spanish for *Win the Green*), Spanish-speaking immigrants—some illegal, some legal—perform *Fear Factor*-style stunts (jumping on and off speeding 18-wheelers, gobbling a live-scorpion-filled burrito) and odd jobs (like washing windows on a high-rise) to win a whole different kind of green:



a year of legal aid from a Beverly Hills-based law firm hired by the show's producers to expedite the immigration process. "We're trying to give people something that will give them a better life," says Lenard Liberman, *Verde*'s exec producer and owner/exec VP of Liberman Broadcasting, which airs the show five nights a week to over a million viewers in L.A., as well as in San Diego, Houston, and Dallas. "Isn't that better than giving someone breast

implants or a toaster oven?"

At least the toaster oven comes with a guarantee. Out of 25 episodes, not one of the victors has received a green card. ("They're all in the pipeline," says Liberman.) But those results haven't hurt ratings. In the L.A. area, *Verde* has consistently landed the No. 2 slot

among Hispanic 18- to 49-year-olds since its July 1 debut. Meanwhile, TV, radio, and Internet promos

have turned up thousands of eager applicants.

So far, says Liberman, there have been no complaints by immigration authorities about *Verde*. But some officials are seeing red. "A lawyer does not equal a green card," says one Homeland Security adviser who requested anonymity. "They're doing all these demeaning things and may end up with nothing but disappointment." —Nancy Miller



LET'S GO TO THE TAPE

NBC promises the Athens Games will be the most "in-depth" Olympic broadcast in history (Aug. 11-29). Still not enough? Our Olympic film festival is for you. —Whitney Pastorek



Gymnacting!

Mitch Gaylord (left) scored a perfect 10 in 1984, then scored a role in 1986's *American Anthem* as...a gymnast! Kurt Thomas never won an Olympic medal (damn that 1980 U.S. boycott!),

but in *Gymkata* (1985), he tumbles his way to martial-arts gold! And who can forget Mary Lou Retton in 1988's *Scrooged*?



Cool Runnings

Charlots of Fire (1981, left), about slo-mo running at the 1924 Games, defines the genre. Steve Prefontaine's early death won him two biopics (1997's *Prefontaine* has the best lines: "Give

up your foolish dreams, Steeeve!"). Then there's 1982's *Personal Best*. Um, it's not about girls kissing; it's about track.



Triumph of the Spirit

Bob Costas *dreams* of stories like these: WWII-era Jewish fencer Ralph Flennes converts to Christianity in *Sunshine* (1999, left). Wee Bill Travers bulks up to hammer-throw in *Geordie* (1955).

And in *You're the Greatest, Charlie Brown* (1979), Chuck overcomes his own giant head to compete in the school Olympics.

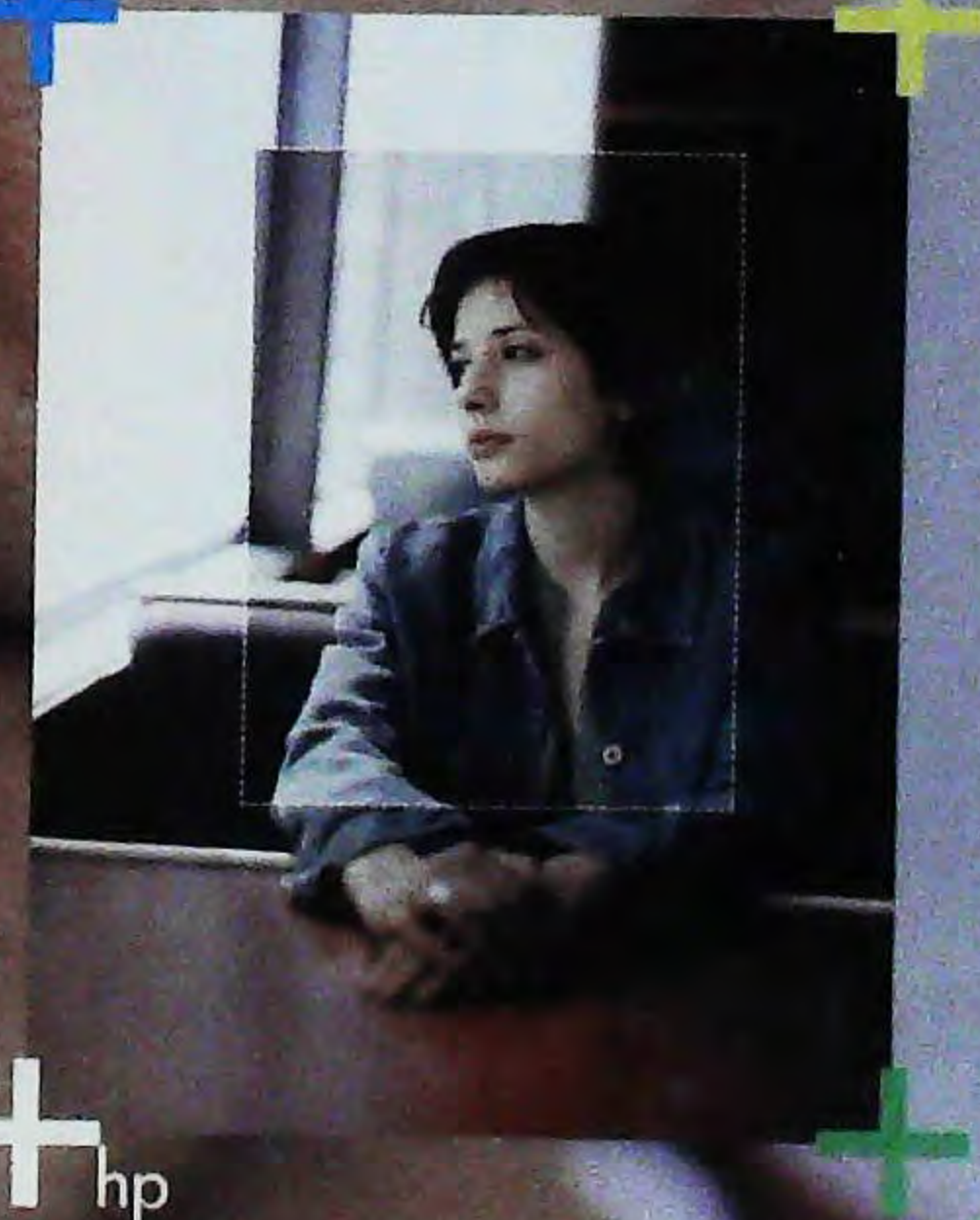


Chill Out

For a look forward to the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy, and to our favorite event, there's 1992's *The Cutting Edge*. D.B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly are a tempestuous pair of

figure skaters who try to master the physics-defying Pamchenko—and find love along the way. Toe pick!

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The New 2005 V6 Nissan Altima



SHIFT_style

➔ STYLE SHEET



'City' Billboards

Sex and the City's fashionistas live on in advertisements

SEX SELLS. OR AT LEAST THAT'S what Maybelline New York is hoping. The cosmetics giant has tapped *Sex and the City's* Kristin Davis to be the new face of thirty-something beauty in an ad campaign launching this winter.

And with castmate—and hawker for Maybelline sister company Garnier—Sarah Jessica Parker making a fall into the Gap's new campaign (right), *Sex*-ing up ads may be the hottest trend since the return of the Chanel jacket.

"People are so familiar with the show that they feel like they know us," says Davis. "In

Sarah's case, she's so fashionable and original that the Gap seems like the perfect fit."

But really...the Gap? Maybelline? What would Park Avenue

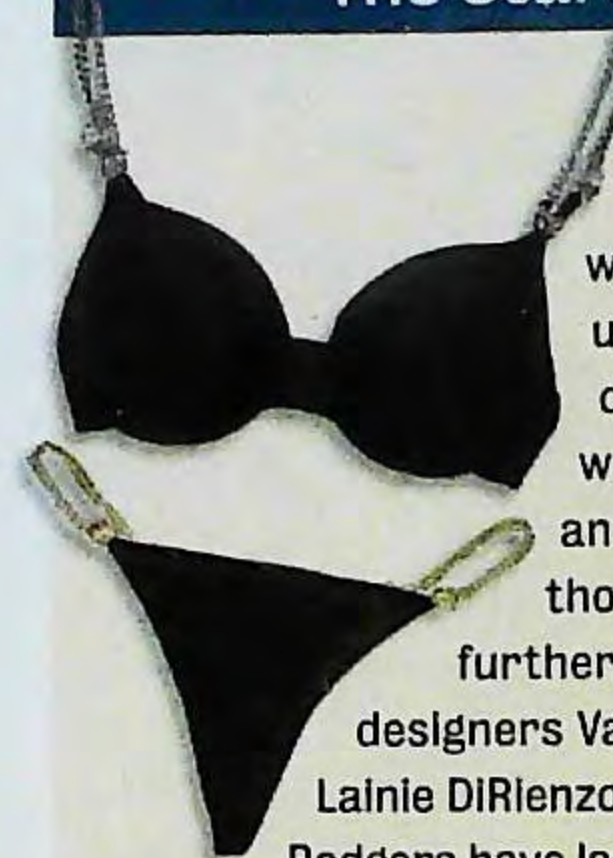
princess (and likely La Mer devotee) Charlotte think of all this?

"She'd love it!" says Davis, who just inked a development deal with HBO and lends her voice to Nickelodeon's *Miss Spider's Sunny*

Patch Friends this fall. "Make-up—especially a brand like this—helps you re-create yourself and feel beautiful." Even Miranda couldn't make a case against that. —Karyn L. Barr



The stars come out for...



STRAP HANGERS Apparently there are people who feel we're not seeing enough underwear these days. Taking the wayward bra strap

and peekaboo thong one step further, L.A.-based designers Valerie and Lainie DiRienzo and Jackie

Rodgers have launched Tail Bait, a line of "outer underwear" that features rhinestone-studded bras, thongs, and camisoles meant to be flaunted. "It's okay for things to show as long as you make it pretty instead of tacky," says Rodgers. Perhaps, but color us not surprised that fans include Nicole Richie, Jillian Barberie, and Taryn Manning. And the designers are hoping for more: "We're coming up with little decorations that are different from rhinestones, because we want to appeal to everybody."

Utility: **C** Trash appeal: **A** —Nick White



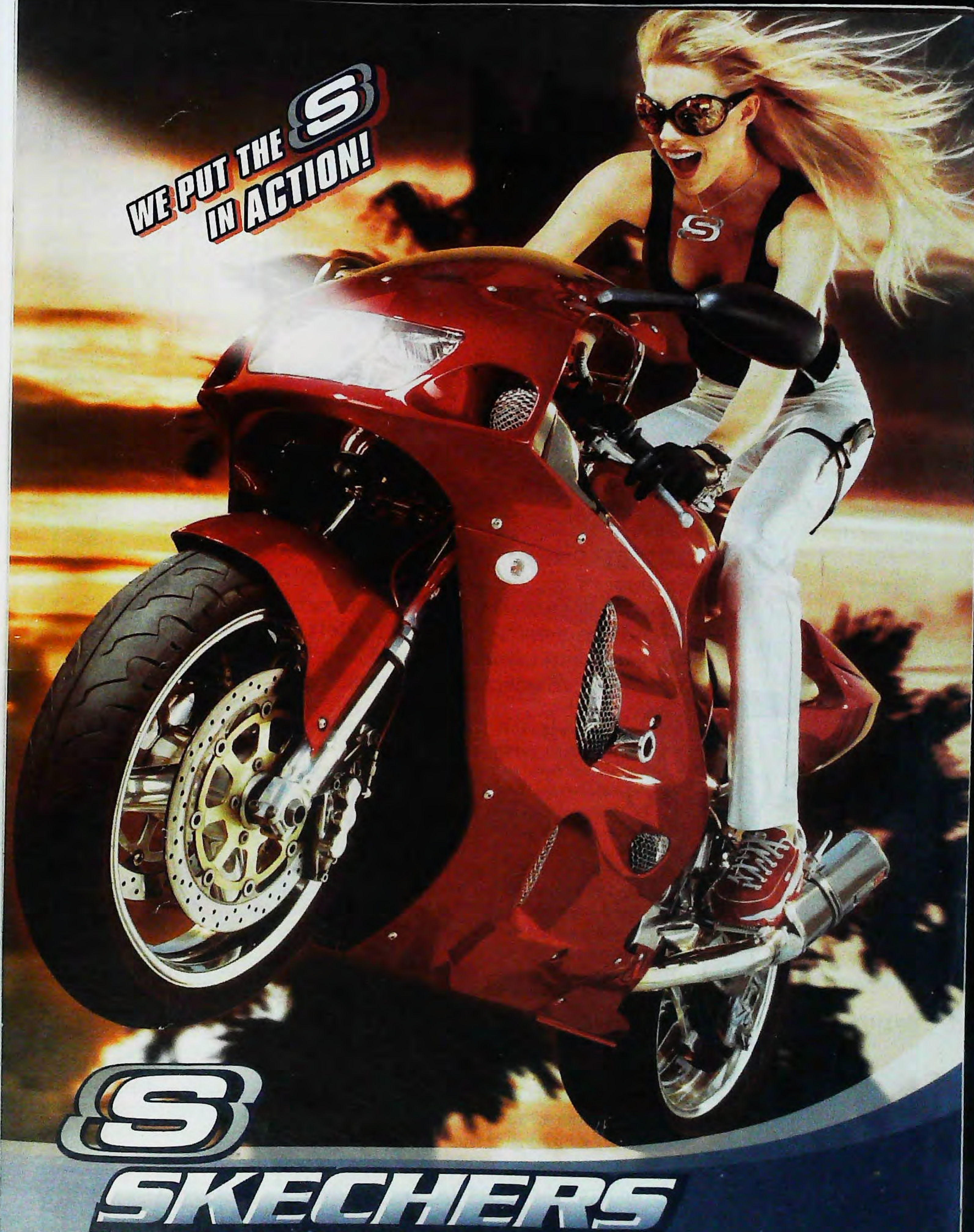
TEE HEE Tired of those overpriced "J'Adore Dior" tees, L.A.-based designer Rocío Soler whipped up a sartorial retort. And voilà! "Je Déteste Fakes" tanks that send up logo-happy fashion victims. "I wanted to do a funny spoof," she says. Soon, her cheeky—and affordable—Jolie Vie label (Cameron Diaz and Christina Aguil-

era are fans of the \$40 tees; there's also a snarky greeting card line) will take on overpampered tots: The upcoming spring line includes an "I Only Fly First Class" baby onesie. Sadly, the irony will no doubt be lost on some customers. —Alice M. Lee



The Shaw Report BY JESSICA SHAW

IN	FIVE MINUTES AGO	OUT
DOUBLE DATES	DOUBLE AGENTS	DDs
FROZEN GRAPES	FROZEN PINEAPPLE	FROZEN BANANAS
NAKOMIS	POCAHONTAS	TACOMA



Monitor

ENGAGEMENTS



7th Heaven star **Barry Watson**, 30, and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* designer **Tracy Hutson**, 28, will wed. No date has been set.

ARRESTS

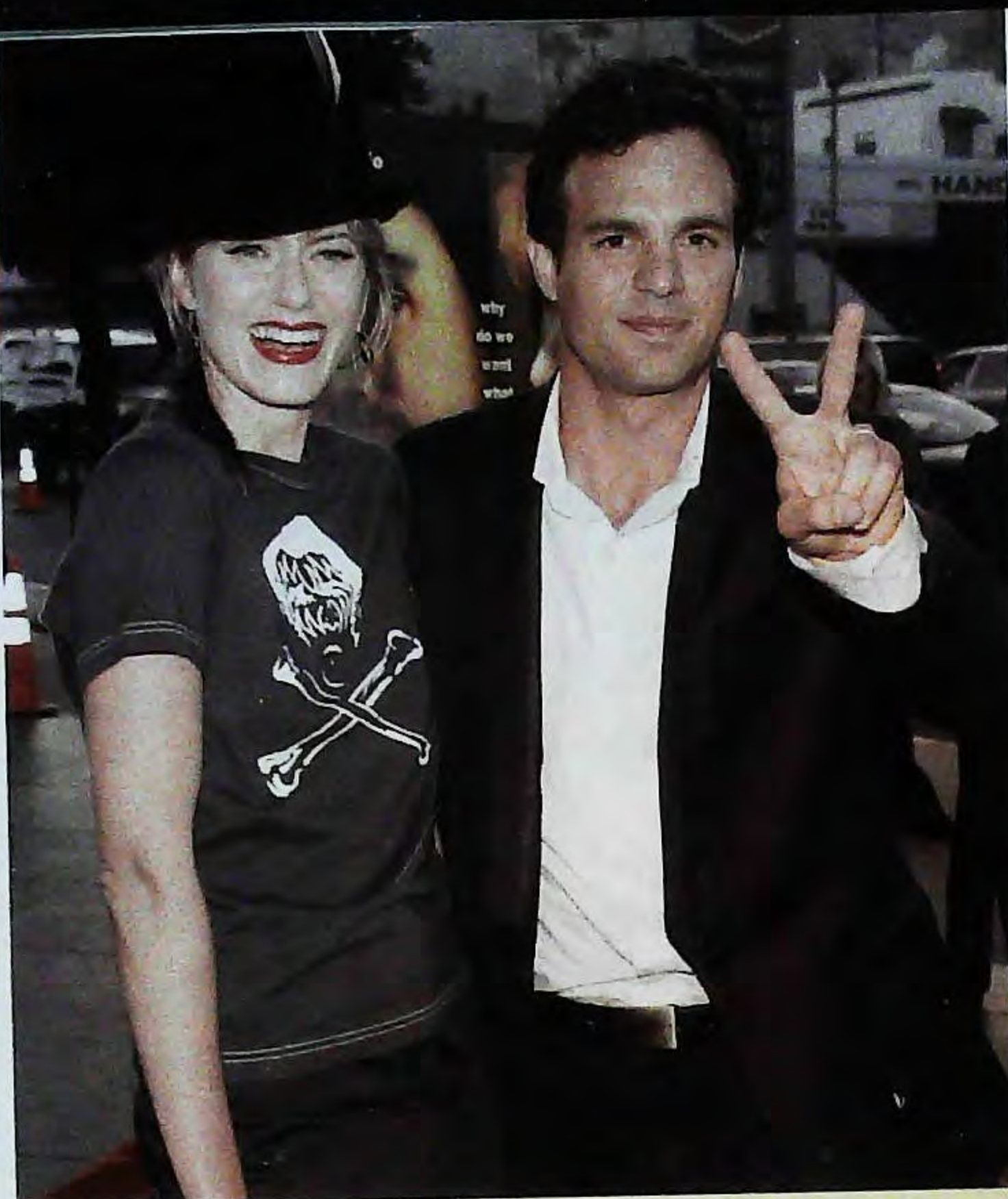


Country singer and former Dean Cain fiancée **Mindy McCready** (*Ten Thousand Angels*), 28, was arrested Aug. 5 in Nashville and charged with prescription drug fraud after allegedly using a fake prescription to obtain OxyContin. She was released the same day on \$10,000 bond. The singer could not be reached for comment.

COURTS

Claudia Jordan, a Barker's Beauty, and **Sylvia Clement-Henry**, a producer's assistant, filed suit Aug. 3 in L.A.

against *The Price Is Right* and host **Bob Barker**, 80, claiming wrongful termination and racial discrimination. The pair is seeking unspecified damages. Barker's lawyer said the suit has "no basis in fact."... Paparazzo David Keeler filed suit in L.A. Aug. 10 against **Christina Aguilera**, 23, and a bodyguard. Keeler alleges the



PREMIERE Seems like *We Don't Live Here Anymore*'s **Mark Ruffalo** (with wife **Sunrise**) has been walking the red carpet all summer. "I have nothing left to say about myself," he said Aug. 5. "And I've worn all my nice clothes."

singer's guard punched him outside a nightclub May 21 and seeks unspecified damages. Reps for Aguilera said they had "yet to see the complaint."

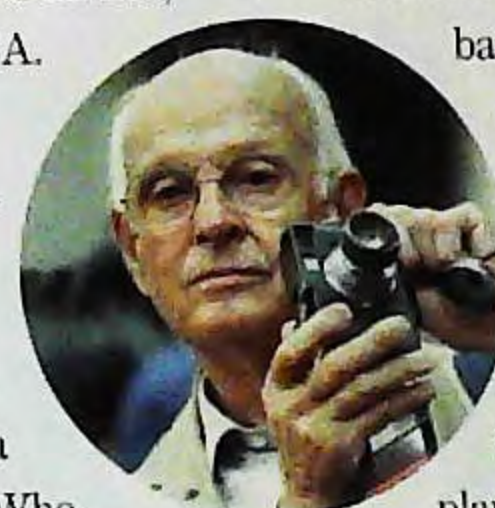
MERGERS

On Aug. 5, **Sony Music Entertainment** and **BMG** announced the completion of their merger. Sony BMG Music Entertainment has revenues of

approximately \$6 billion and the ability to crush smaller companies (ha-ha) with its labels like Arista, Columbia, Epic, and RCA.

REPEALS

Cincinnati's city council lifted its ban on festival seating Aug. 4. The law resulted from a 1979 concert where 11 Who fans were killed in a stampede at what is now the U.S. Bank Arena.



in Newfoundland.... Oscar-nominated composer **David Rakitin** (*Laura*), 92, of heart failure, Aug. 9, in Van Nuys, Calif.... Actor **Frank Maxwell** (*General Hospital*), 87, of complications from heart disease, Aug. 4, in Santa Monica.... Guitarist **Tony Mottola**, 86, who played with Frank Sinatra, of complications from double pneumonia and stroke, Aug. 9, in Denville, N.J. —*Whitney Pastorek, with additional reporting by Carrie Bell*

RECOVERING

Mee-OW. Original Catwoman **Eartha Kitt** (below, left), 77, suffered minor injuries in a car accident Aug. 5 in Westport, Conn. Kitt was treated at Norwalk Hospital and released. "We're glad to say that she's absolutely fine," say reps.... **Ronald Isley**, 63, lead singer of the Isley Brothers, suffered a minor stroke July 30 in London. He is on the mend at his home in St. Louis. Reps said Isley "can't wait to get back on the road."... Oak Ridge Boy **William Lee Golden**, 65, suffered a mild heart attack Aug. 7 near Wausau, Wis. While he recovers, his son Chris will ba-oom-bop in his place.

DEATHS

Bob Murphy, 79, New York Mets broadcaster from 1962 to 2003, of lung cancer, Aug. 3, in Palm Beach County, Fla.... Photographer **Henri Cartier-Bresson** (below), 95, who captured everything from the Spanish Civil War to Gandhi, of unknown causes, Aug. 3, in southern France.... Oscar-nominated film editor **Geraldine Peroni** (*The Player*), 51, Aug. 3, after a fall from her NYC apartment window.... Oil

field fireman **Red Adair**, 89, the basis for John Wayne's character in *Hellfighters*, of unknown causes, Aug. 7, in Houston.... Actor **Andre Noble** (*Sugar*), 25, poisoned by a wild plant, July 30, while hiking



LEGACY She became an icon by simply writhing in the clutch of a giant, hairy fist. **Fay Wray**, 96—who died Aug. 8 in NYC—made more than 90 films and helped persuade Archibald Leach to change his name to Cary Grant, but she's best remembered as the object of a gorilla's affections in 1933's *King Kong*. "I wasn't the first boy to fall in love with her," says director Peter Jackson (currently shooting a *Kong* remake). "I'm sure I won't be the last."

•jennifer lopez



VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS LIVE

8.29
SUNDAY
8pm/7c

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Hoobastank • Yellowcard • Kanye West
Lil' Jon • Petey Pablo • Ying Yang Twins
Terror Squad featuring Fat Joe • Alicia Keys
Nelly • Outkast • Christina Aguilera
Dave Chappelle and more...

scheduled to appear:

Ludacris • Tony Hawk • Paris Hilton
Lenny Kravitz • P. Diddy • Jon Stewart
Ashlee Simpson • LL Cool J • Will Smith
Beastie Boys • Jimmy Fallon • Queen Latifah
Hilary Duff • Shaquille O'Neal and more...

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FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

Still catching summer flicks? Hollywood's ahead of you. The shakers have staked out fall, and this year's prestige-picture lineup teems with the lives of famous guys: Kevin Spacey is crooner Bobby Darin (*Beyond the Sea*), and Jamie Foxx is the late Ray Charles (*Ray*). Colin Farrell dons a tunic to play Macedonian king Alexander, Gael García Bernal embodies revolutionary Che Guevara in *The Motorcycle Diaries*, and Liam Neeson frets in a lab coat as sex researcher Kinsey. You can also expect dueling cheekbone action from Leonardo DiCaprio (*The Aviator*) and Johnny Depp (*Finding Neverland*). If all that sounds too A&E *Biography*, there'll be CG superheroes (*The Incredibles*), not to mention a chick flick or two (*Wimbledon*, *Shall We Dance?*). And if you've got a Jude Law Jones, rejoice: He appears in six films before New Year's, beginning with our first entry, *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*. So let it out, and let it in. Hey, Jude, begin!

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN McFAUL

* SEPTEMBER

FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

STARRING Jude Law, Gwyneth Paltrow, Angelina Jolie, Giovanni Ribisi, Michael Gambon

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Kerry Conran



"I never thought me, of all people, would be in a movie where they'd be like, 'Okay, roll to your left—there's a giant robot foot coming at you!'"

says Paltrow. "But I love the fact that I am." Paramount's loving that fact too, because with *Sky Captain*—a \$70 million-plus meld of flesh and blood and digital animation that's steeped in old-school sci-fi like *Commando Cody* serials and Max Fleischer *Superman* cartoons and directed by a rookie filmmaker—the studio is fielding one of the fall's riskiest offerings. Fortunately, the box office prospects are bolstered by not just one Oscar winner but two, with Jolie sporting a Brit accent and an eye patch as the leader of an elite amphibious squadron (mop up that drool, fanboy!). There's also two-time Oscar nominee Law, who brings along his geek cred: Would you believe the *Cold Mountain* golden boy collects comic books? "I got the film immediately," says Law. "I just thought it was about time someone took us back to a science-fiction genre that's without cynicism, that's more innocent and optimistic." Law (also a producer) plays the titular hero, a rakish adventurer who teams with his reporter ex-girlfriend (Paltrow) to rescue his trusty sidekick (Ribisi) and some

scientists from a mystery villain named Dr. Totenkopf. Conran spent 10 years developing *Sky Captain*—four years alone on a six-minute test video that proved compelling enough to land him a producer (Jon Avnet), independent financing (Paramount purchased U.S. distribution rights last summer), and his cast (Paltrow committed even before seeing a script).

Shot entirely against green screen on London soundstages, *Sky Captain* was originally scheduled for a June release but was moved to fall at Avnet's urging. "I begged them not to come out right before *Spider-Man 2*. You can't compete with that. God bless 'em for changing their minds," says Avnet, adding that the extra time allowed Conran and his team of 89 computer artists to fine-tune the film. After a decade-long filmmaking journey, the shy, unassuming Conran says he's not sure what to do with himself now. "I keep thinking, 'I have to go to work tomorrow'—but we're finished. It's going to take awhile for those withdrawals to go away," he says. "I hope I can actually *think* about something else." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Oh, only the future of the highly lucrative, big-budget, computer-generated, retro-sci-fi genre. (Sept. 17)

SKY CAPTAIN

AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

—The Motorcycle Diaries

STARRING Gael García Bernal, Rodrigo de la Serna, Mía Maestro, Mercedes Moran, Jorge Chiarella

WRITTEN BY José Rivera

DIRECTED BY Walter Salles

BASED ON CHE GUEVARA'S BOYHOOD MEMOIRS ABOUT motorbiking through South America in the 1950s with his best friend, Salles' road-trip pic sets out to humanize the Communist revolutionary. "Che is a character who is so demonized in the United States," laments the Brazilian director. But he was an adored subject at the Sundance Film Festival, where Salles' film was snapped up by Focus Features for a cool \$4 million, an impressive Park City payout for a Spanish-language movie.

Woored by Bernal's fine work in 2001's *Amores Perros*—"He is the most gifted actor of his generation, full stop," says Salles—the director tapped the almond-eyed young star to play Guevara, whose seeds of political zeal were sown when the 23-year-old med student trekked through Argentina, Peru, and Chile, falling in love with Latin America's forgotten poor along the way. "In Mexico, you grow up with stories of Che, and I always found him a great inspiration," says Bernal. And now, according to Salles, moviegoers are leaving early screenings of the film similarly inspired. "People tell me, I want to go on the road, I want to experiment, I want to trespass the boundaries I've respected. If a film is able to generate that kind of reaction, we who took part in the adventure of making it couldn't be happier." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Possibly a Latin American filmmaking boom. "The fact that *Amores Perros* and *Y Tu Mamá También* were well received opened a number of doors," says Salles. "I hope after this we'll see more films coming from our end of the world." (Sept. 24)



Bernal motors with de la Serna in *Diaries*



Bettany and Dunst go courting

Wimbledon

STARRING Paul Bettany, Kirsten Dunst, Jon Favreau, Sam Neill, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau

WRITTEN BY Adam Brooks, Jennifer Flackett, Mark Levin
DIRECTED BY Richard Loncraine

BOY MEETS GIRL. GIRL HELPS BOY WITH TENNIS GAME. BOY goes on to reach the finals of the most prestigious tennis tournament in the world. Pretty simple, right? Until it came time to make that boy and that girl look like pros in front of a camera. Dunst, fresh off shooting *Spider-Man 2*, showed up well prepared for the rigors of training: Her New Jersey family has always been athletic and she had long dabbled in the sport.

"I love tennis. My dad used to play with me," says Dunst, who portrays Lizzie, a cocky star in the Venus Williams mold. "I liked the role reversal," she adds. "My character is kind of the guy in the movie, really aggressive."

Unfortunately, the bulk of the racquet work fell on her nicotine-addicted costar, who could be spotted compulsively smoking Marlboro Lights between action shots. "I'd never played tennis before. I thought, 'This will be nice, a romantic comedy in London! A paid holiday!'" laughs Bettany, who plays Lizzie's love interest Peter, a tour journeyman. "Then six months of tennis pulled into view and you realize that it's an arrogant thing that you've agreed to do. It's like saying, 'Yes! I'd love to play Rudolf Nureyev! Let's ballet!'"

After months of training—a good deal of it with former champ Pat Cash—Bettany looked credible enough to take Centre Court

at the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club. Which is good news for our friends across the Atlantic, who have been patiently waiting for a British men's Wimbledon champion—even a fictional one—since Fred Perry last turned the trick in 1936. In fact, it has become something of an annual tradition in the U.K. to watch London native Tim Henman make a futile run at the title. "I think we were the only ones in England *not* rooting for Tim this year," says producer Eric Felner (*Love Actually*). "Because, look, if your fictional character is supposed to get to the finals and it hasn't happened in 60 years in real life and it [actually] happens before your movie opens...well, that's a bit of a muck-up." Luckily, Henman was knocked out in the quarterfinals.

WHAT'S AT STAKE Bettany's chance to move from being everyone's favorite sidekick to the big romantic lead. (Sept. 17)



Rhys Meyers and Witherspoon embrace the possibilities

Vanity Fair

STARRING Reese Witherspoon, James Purefoy, Gabriel Byrne, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Jim Broadbent, Rhys Ifans

WRITTEN BY Julian Fellowes

DIRECTED BY Mira Nair

WITHERSPOON PLAYED SASSY FASHIONISTAS OF THE most current stripe in *Sweet Home Alabama* and *Legally Blonde*. India-born Nair directed 2002's *Monsoon Wedding*, about the arranged marriage of a very modern New Delhi woman. So you might not expect the two to take on an adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's 19th-century *Vanity Fair*, which follows Becky Sharp (Witherspoon) as she schemes her way to the top of London society during the Napoleonic Wars.

Witherspoon says the film's not as mannered as you might think: "The greatest sell Mira had for me was she was using her own heritage and cultural influences to reinterpret what we consider the British period movie." Asserts Nair: "It's not in any sense a museum piece. It's very vivid, not frozen in any way."

In fact, there was movement everywhere—particularly outward: Witherspoon became pregnant with her second child before the

three-month shoot. Nair was thrilled. She'd jokingly asked Witherspoon's husband, Ryan Phillippe, to help Reese add some era-appropriate curves. "I said, '[I hate] this bloody anorexic Los Angeles look,'" Nair recalls. "I said, 'Knock her up, I want some flesh! I want some breasts, I want some fullness, darlin'!' And I got my wish."

To handle the, er, bump in the production schedule, Becky's impending motherhood was written into extra scenes, and Witherspoon spent some carefully choreographed time behind rugs and furniture. But Nair had also dreamed up a Bollywood-style dance for Becky to perform and hated to lose the number. "They brought me all these half tops," says Witherspoon, who shot the scene five months pregnant. "I was like, I just don't think that's going to cut it. So half the strategizing was how to cover my stomach. It's insane—you cannot tell I'm pregnant." As for her character, Witherspoon didn't play Miss Sharp particularly old-school. "She's really a woman born at the wrong time. She's a revolutionary feminist and believes in using her femininity to her advantage." And if she were alive today? "Oh gosh, I'm going to try not to be cynical," Witherspoon says. "She'd probably be running a small country." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Audiences prefer Witherspoon pretty in pink, not period (*The Importance of Being Earnest* tanked), so will they flock to see her in this Georgian-era *Fair*? (Sept. 1)

Mr. 3000

STARRING Bernie Mac, Angela Bassett, Michael Rispoli

WRITTEN BY Eric Champnella, Keith Mitchell, Howard Michael Gould

DIRECTED BY Charles Stone III

OVER 10-PLUS YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT, JOHN TRAVOLTA, Denzel Washington, and Richard Gere were all supposed to star as the bigheaded baseball king who comes out of retirement to earn back three newly disqualified hits that guarantee his spot in the Hall of Fame. Finally, the role fell to Mac, a sitcom star and movie sidekick (*Charlie's Angels 2*) who's looking to ace the transition to leading man. "It fit me," says Mac. "As an actor, as a comic, and as my first lead." Stone (*Drumline*, *Paid in Full*) says he butted heads with the studio because he wanted to play down 3000's "tomfoolery" to make room for the heart. "The comedy is secondary," Stone insists. "For this film to go down with *Field of Dreams*, *The Natural*, and *Bull Durham*, it had to have a level of integrity that takes it out of the bounds of slapstick, to where people take this character seriously despite the humor." Mac welcomed the dramatic challenge. Working with Bassett, who plays an ESPN correspondent, also improved his game. "She threw it at me, and I caught it," Mac promises. "He did," coos an admiring Bassett. "He did." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** He caught it, but can he hit it out of the park? (Sept. 17)



Mac takes a swing at a leading role

The Final Cut

STARRING Robin Williams, Jim Caviezel, Mira Sorvino

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Omar Naim

IT'S SOMEWHERE BETWEEN PHILIP K. DICK AND *THE CONVERSATION*, says Naim—not that the 26-year-old filmmaker knew thing one about cyberpunk novelist Dick when he started dreaming up his first feature. Rather, while editing his college-thesis film, he got homesick for his family in Lebanon. "I thought, 'Wouldn't it be interesting if there was a way that life could be recorded and edited?'" Thus, in *Cut*, kids have chips prenatally implanted in their

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heads to gather material for postmortem movies. Williams is a "cutter" who assembles footage, while Caviezel plays an activist opposed to the technology and Sorvino is Williams' ex, a book dealer. "She's the moral center," says the actress. "She represents the old world."

Naim got behind the camera after telling producer Nick Wechsler (*Requiem for a Dream*) to take it or leave it: "I simply said, 'This is a screenplay that's not for sale. Here are my storyboards.'" That show of guts got him directing a movie that premiered at the Berlin film festival, where audience reception was warm and critical response was...not. "The movie," Naim says, "is not gonna please everybody."

WHAT'S AT STAKE Can Williams, after *Insomnia* and *One Hour Photo*, keep his dark-creepy-thrilling streak alive? (Sept. 24)



Theron soaks up the sun in *Clouds*

Head in the Clouds

STARRING Charlize Theron, Stuart Townsend, Penélope Cruz, Thomas Kretschmann, Steven Berkhoff

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY John Dulgan

TWO DAYS AFTER WRAPPING *MONSTER*, THERON FLEW TO Montreal and began work on *Clouds*, a lush epic set in Europe during World War II. "It was nice to fall into this world that was day and night from what I had been doing," says Theron, referring to her Oscar-winning role as serial killer Aileen Wuornos. "I liked throwing these three people together and having this great debate about war, love, and friendship." The trio in question are Theron's Gilda, a vivacious, carefree photographer; Townsend's Guy, a soft-spoken lefty intellectual; and Cruz's Mia, a sexy Spanish dancer. Together, they live in bohemian harmony in Paris...until the war separates them. And, yes, real-life sweethearts Theron and Townsend play lovers—a matter that only briefly gave them pause. "There is this stigma attached to working with your [partner]," says Theron, "but Stu and I are very private." Adds Townsend: "This is not *Gigli*, we're not Ben and J. Lo." He even argues there's an upside: "You've been given a chance to be two other people, and explore different aspects [of your relationship]. So Gilda can break Guy's heart, I can feel that, and then we can go home and forget about it." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Theron's post-Oscar, A-list cred: Will she prove herself again, without fake teeth and leathery skin? (Sept. 17)



Moore searches for her lost boy

The Forgotten

STARRING Julianne Moore, Dominic West, Gary Sinise, Alfre Woodard, Anthony Edwards

WRITTEN BY Gerald DiPego

DIRECTED BY Joseph Ruben

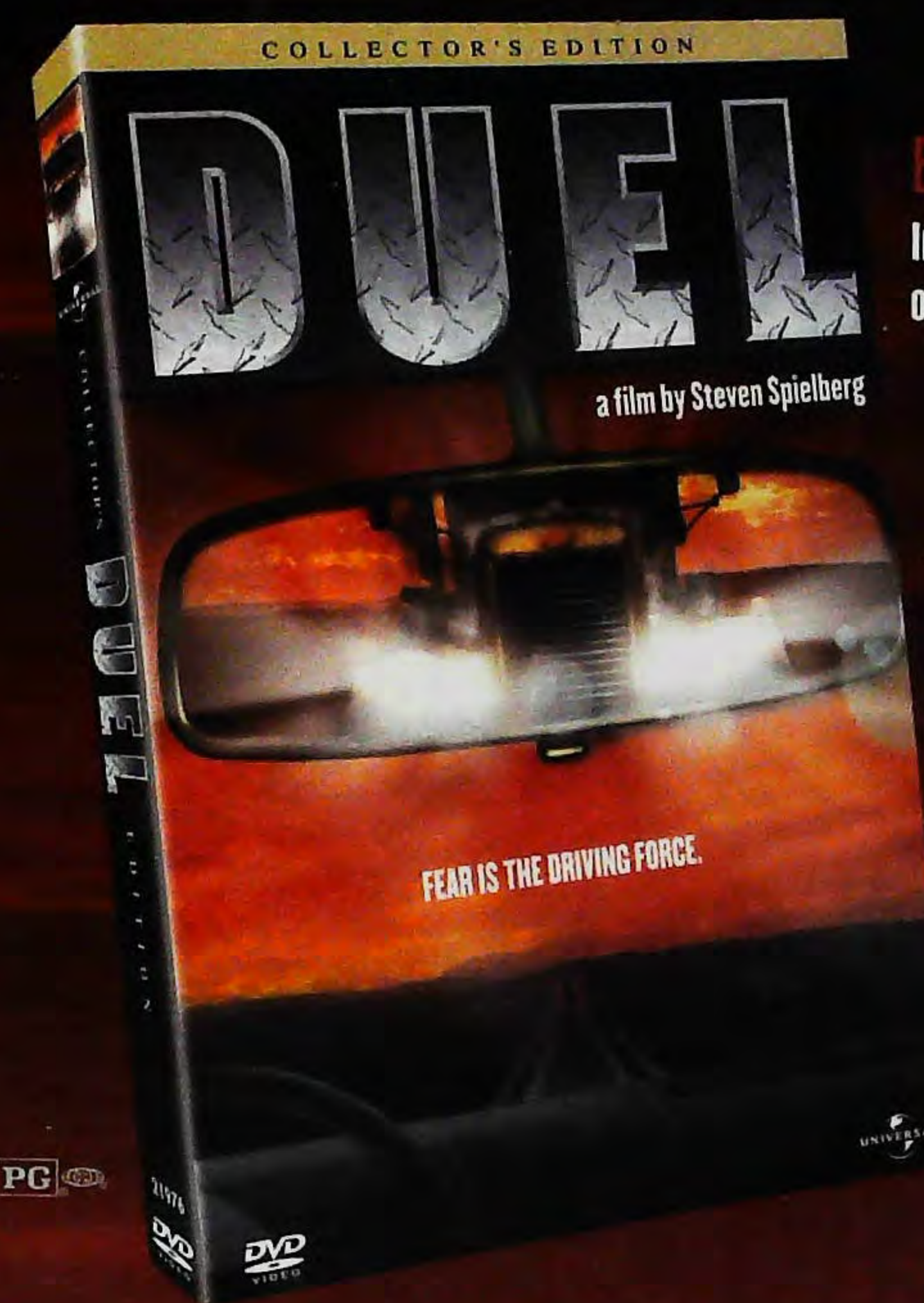
IT'S ABOUT A WOMAN WHO'S WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING to get back her lost son," says thriller vet Ruben (*Sleeping With the Enemy*), whose last film was 1998's *Return to Paradise*. "The only problem is, her son may never have existed, so that's the central mystery of the movie. Did he ever exist? And if he existed, what happened to him? Is she crazy or is the world crazy?"

Unless you're counting *Hannibal* (let's not), it's Moore's first psychological thriller. "Which is why I was attracted to it," she says. "I was excited by the script right away. You read it and you don't know what's happening. You can't even figure out what kind of movie it is initially. You're like, 'Wait a minute.' And it carries you off in the first 10 pages—you're like, 'What's going on?' Which was fun. It's really an unusual movie."

West, of HBO's *The Wire*, plays a guy who teams up with Moore after he starts to think *he* had a kid that nobody remembers too. The actor landed the part even though there was a mix-up and he missed his original audition for Moore and Ruben. "I was absolutely furious, and gutted," West says. But granted a second chance, he won Moore over. And he relished the part. "Emotionally it was great—very harrowing," he says. "Lots of physical stuff, lots of fighting, lots of chasing and being chased and being drunk and being grief-stricken and being in love. It was a nice, meaty role."

Last month, Ruben spent three days reshooting the finale. "We're making the ending scarier, more thrillerish," he reports from the set. "And we came up with an amazing moment at the very end of the climax that we want to do in a different way that's going to be extremely spectacular." Says West: "It's very difficult making a thriller these days, after movies like *Memento* redefined them. Audiences are so sophisticated with thrillers that you have to come out with something pretty amazing, and I'm hoping we have, but we'll know soon enough." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Moore's rep as a studio-movie leading lady could use a quick boost after this year's forgotten *Laws of Attraction*. (Sept. 24)

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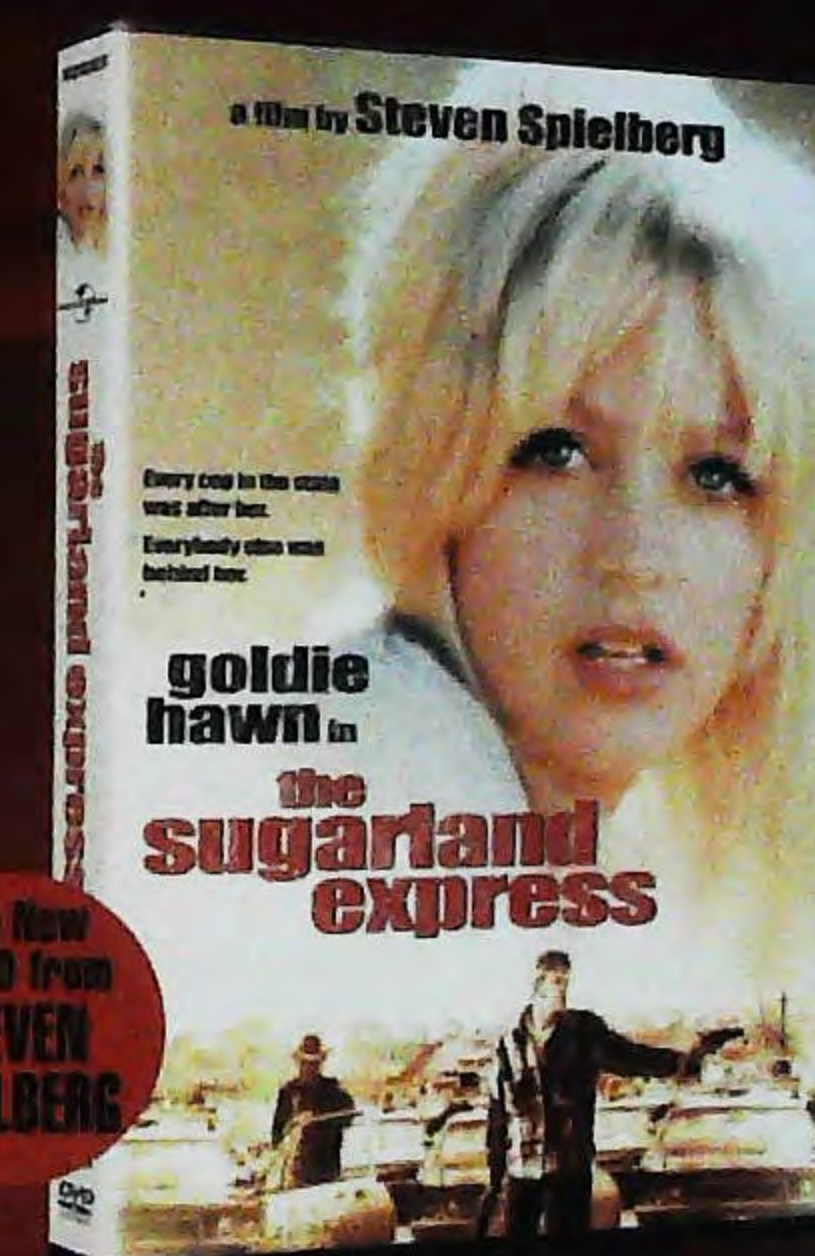


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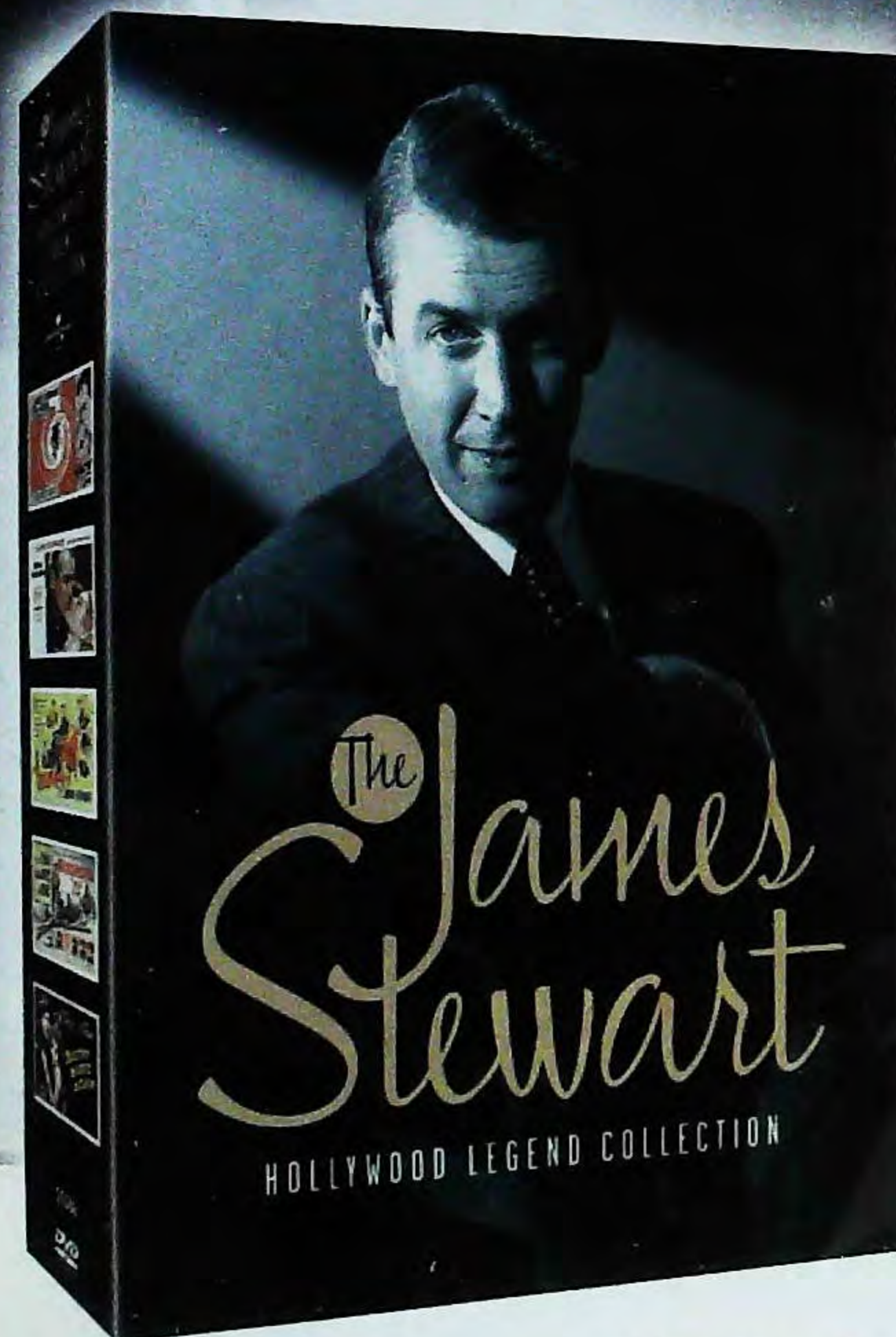
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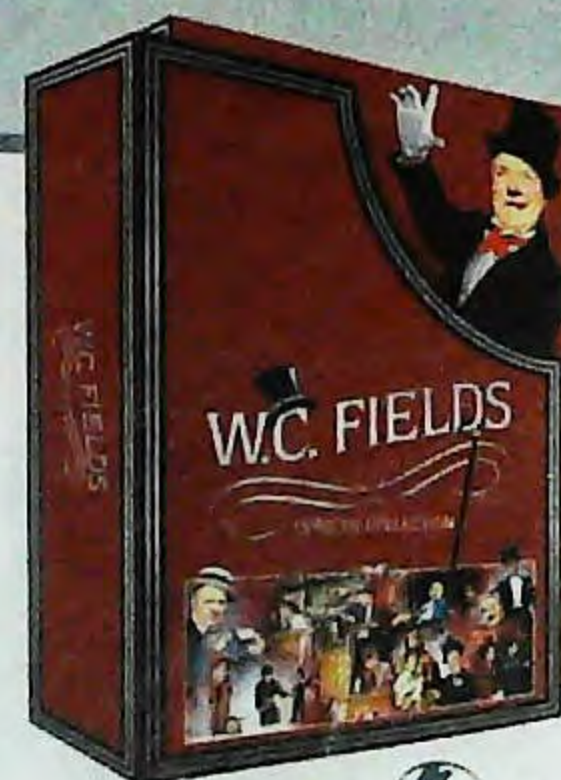
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First Daughter

STARRING Katie Holmes, Marc Blucas, Michael Keaton, Amerle Rogers, Margaret Collin

WRITTEN BY Jessica Bendinger, Kate Klondell

DIRECTED BY Forest Whitaker

A TEEN ICON AS THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER, FALLING IN LOVE with a boy with a secret, and having adventures away from her Secret Service retinue. Didn't this movie open already? Kinda. Fox moved *Daughter* from its early-'04 date to get away from the wildly similar Mandy Moore vehicle, *Chasing Liberty*. Though according to Whitaker, *Daughter* is totally different. "I'm telling a Siddhartha story," he says, referring to the myth of the Buddha prince seeking enlightenment. But Whitaker quickly adds that his literary inspiration is barely noticeable (and he encourages us to think more *Sabrina*). Holmes played hard-to-get, and only agreed to be cast after Whitaker was hired and retooled the script. "I was finishing *Dawson's Creek* and I was terrified at the thought of doing anything else," she says. "I wanted to make sure the movie [had] a strong script." Producer John Davis is more pointed (and slightly ironic): "She wanted to make sure it wasn't a kiddie pic, another Mandy Moore/Hilary Duff movie." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Well, *Chasing Liberty* wasn't exactly a hit. (Sept. 24)



First friends Holmes and Rogers

Silver City

STARRING Chris Cooper, Marla Bello, Danny Huston, Billy Zane, Daryl Hannah, Richard Dreyfuss

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY John Sayles

A S DICKIE PILAGER, A CLUELESS, INARTICULATE CANDIDATE for governor with a powerful politician for a father, sinister corporate backers, and an Everyman's Midwestern twang, Cooper mimics our president's inflections down to the last malaprop. But Sayles intended his film—about a disgraced ex-journalist (Huston) who uncovers a conspiracy while investigating a dead body on

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the set of a Pilager TV ad—to be a much broader attack. "I based the character on Bush because I wanted people to connect the dots between the movie and what's going on in our country," he says. "But when you get past that, there's stuff that applies to all politicians and our whole system." Sayles wrote, directed, and finished the sprawling drama in a year, intent on a preelection release that he hopes inspires the public to think...and act. "You can't expect Spider-Man to come and fix [things]," he says. His cast seems to be equally dedicated: When asked if she's nervous about being in such a partisan film, Bello (who plays Huston's ex) replies, "I'd be happy to be a part of any film that helps get George Bush out of office." That would be a no, then. **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Everything from Sayles making his money back to the 2004 election, technically. (Sept. 17)



Dreyfuss, Zane, and Cooper suit up

The Last Shot

STARRING Matthew Broderick, Alec Baldwin, Toni Collette, Callista Flockhart, Tony Shalhoub, Ray Liotta

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Jeff Nathanson

THINK PROJECT GREENLIGHT CROSSED WITH GOODFELLAS—but, you know, *funny*. Broderick stars as a wannabe director who thinks he's making an independent film when, in reality, he's a pawn in a scheme cooked up by FBI agent Baldwin to infiltrate the Mafia's Teamsters-union ties. As Baldwin gets caught up in dreams of Hollywood glory, Broderick finds his movie spinning out of control. Screenwriter Nathanson (*Catch Me if You Can*, *The Terminal*) considered directing to be "a horrifying prospect" until Disney urged him to give it a shot with this project, which is based on an actual case that took place in Rhode Island in the 1980s. As it happens, his anxiety was ideal fodder: "All Matthew had to do was look at me and he could tell how his face was supposed to look at any given moment," he jokes. Broderick, of course, had his own filmmaking misadventures to draw on (and we're not just talking about *The Stepford Wives*). "We've all had our version of [using] a garbage dump in Rhode Island to stand in for the Grand Canyon," he says. **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Nathanson has another film in development at Disney that he hopes to direct, so hopefully this isn't *his* last shot. (Sept. 24)

OCTOBER



FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

STARRING Jamie Foxx, Regina King, Kerry Washington, Curtis Armstrong, Aunjanue Ellis

WRITTEN BY Taylor Hackford, James L. White

DIRECTED BY Taylor Hackford



To prepare for the lead role in *Ray*—Universal's biopic of legendary R&B musician Ray Charles—Jamie Foxx (*Collateral*) went the Method route. "The first four weeks [of shooting], it was complete darkness," says the star, who wore prosthetics (modeled on Charles' actual eyes) to simulate the singer's blindness. "If you could open your eyes you would cheat on how your body would move, but if you can't see, you can't cheat because you don't know what's there."

One thing Foxx didn't have to fake was the musical mastery. An accomplished pianist, the actor had no problem learning Charles' complex fingering technique. "Jamie said, 'Listen, I started playing when I was 3. I led the band in my gospel church, and I went to university on a piano scholarship,'" says Hackford (*Proof of Life*). "I wish I could tell you I knew that." But it was more than keyboard skills that got the actor—known more for his comedic talents—his first

leading dramatic role. "I've worked with Al Pacino in *The Devil's Advocate*," says Hackford, "and I know you can only stay on the screen with Al if you've got talent. And when I saw Jamie doing scenes with him [in *Any Given Sunday*], I thought he was more than just a comedian—he had dramatic power." Not that the details of Charles' life—a painful childhood, crossing America on a Greyhound bus alone, refusing to obey Jim Crow laws—weren't dramatic enough. "Sometimes you forget about our heroes, and this is a chance for us to look back and go, 'Wow, I didn't know he was that complex,'" says Foxx. "[He went through] all the things that could go wrong for a young African-American male, and he broke the color lines, broke all the barriers, and brought us all together."

While the film was not reedited to deal with Charles' death in June, Foxx says the singer did get to preview the final cut. And? "He loved it." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Leading-man status for Foxx, and maybe even an Oscar nod. Look what playing Ali did for Will Smith. (Oct. 29)

RAY



- Ladder 49

STARRING John Travolta, Joaquin Phoenix, Morris Chestnut, Robert Patrick, Jacinda Barrett

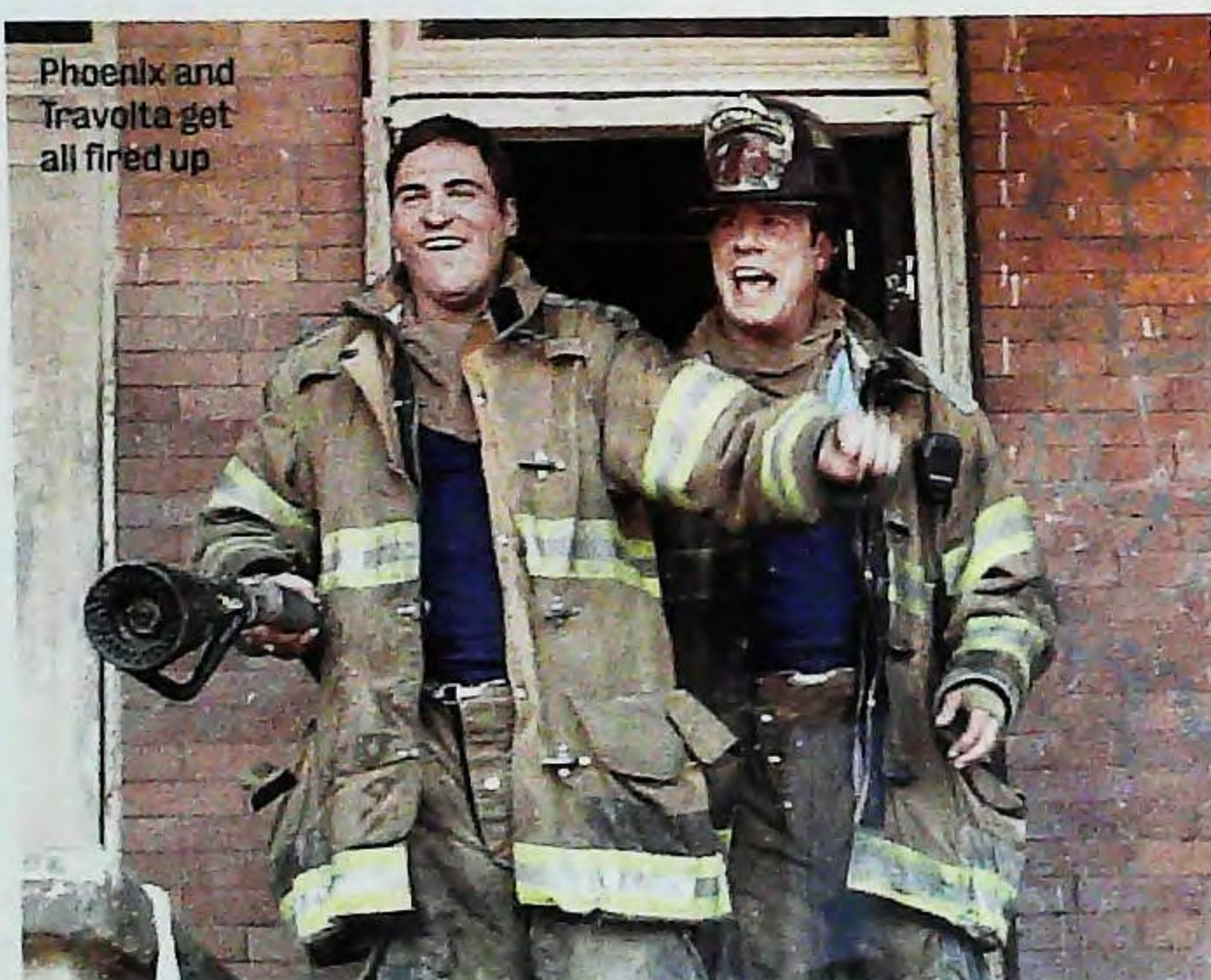
WRITTEN BY Lewis Colick

DIRECTED BY Jay Russell

THE MOST NOT-SO-WELL-KEPT SECRET AMONGST THE FIRE-fighting community is that they didn't care for *Backdraft*," says director Russell (*My Dog Skip*). "There were so many liberties taken. We're no less exciting [with this film], but we're going to portray the firefighting accurately." In between the blazing heroics, Russell tells the "cleverly disguised love story" of Jack Morrison (Phoenix), who reflects on his life and marriage while trapped inside a burning building awaiting rescue from his comrades. "This is more *Black Hawk Down* than *Backdraft*," adds Russell. "These guys just won't leave one of their own behind."

Filming the drama, though—which features Travolta (who, along with Phoenix and other cast members, prepared for his role by attending a real firefighter academy for a month) as Jack's mentor, Patrick and Chestnut as fellow firemen, and Barrett (yes, *Real World: London* fans, it's that Jacinda) as his long-suffering wife—was not without its problems. Russell considered locations on both coasts before returning to Baltimore, the site of his previous two films: "It's very gritty. The bulk of firefighter calls are to situations that are not pleasant." And then Mother Nature decided to get tough. Spring blizzards struck, and a cold June rainstorm nearly halted filming of a spectacular (and purposely set) fire that engulfed an 11-story grain elevator on the city's docks. "It was a horrible problem!" says Russell. "Most of the snowstorm you see in the film was part of that blizzard."

Though *Ladder* was written long before 9/11, Russell says that that terrifying day's overriding themes resonate here: "It's a great love story, an action movie, and a human tale about our next-door neighbors who just happen to be real-life superheroes." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Travolta needs a hit, and with Phoenix—who's hot off *The Village*—at his side, this could be his reversal of fortune. (Oct. 1)



Phoenix and Travolta get all fired up



Law stops traffic in *Alfie*

IT MAY HAVE EARNED MICHAEL CAINE AN OSCAR NOM IN 1967, but *Alfie* isn't exactly a movie cineasts clamor to see remake—even with a leading man like Law. "You can't really remake a classic, [but] you can pay tribute," says the actor, who clearly has deep regard for the original. So how did director Shyer and producer/writing partner Pope pay tribute? By throwing out the old film. "We went back to the novel and took stuff from there that wasn't in the movie," explains Shyer, whose *The Parent Trap* and *Father of the Bride* films (both done with ex-wife Nancy Meyers) make him an unintentional expert on remakes. "We also went back to the play. So it's not like we're doing *Oliver* on Broadway for the eighth time."

Of course, some things about the story haven't changed. *Alfie* is still, uh, kind of a creep. "He's a bit of a misogynist," Shyer admits of the character, who plows through a string of casual love

STARRING Jude Law, Susan Sarandon, Jane Krakowski, Omar Epps, Nia Long, Marisa Tomei, Sienna Miller

WRITTEN BY Elaine Pope, Charles Shyer

DIRECTED BY Charles Shyer

affairs with Tomei, Krakowski, Long, and Miller. But Shyer says he's not worried about trying to sell an unsympathetic lead: "Alfie's not a terribly likable person. But by the end of the movie you really empathize with him." No small thanks to Law. "The camera picks up who you are, and Jude is a good person," adds the director. "There's something about his soulfulness. I could say a million actors you would hate in this role. But not him."

During filming, Law had to navigate his own rough relationship

waters. Fresh from splitting up with his wife of six years, Sadie Frost, the actor developed a romance with costar Miller. "I had been through a divorce not that long ago, so I tried to empathize. But he handled it well," says Shyer, who had far fewer problems with the couple than he did with the paparazzi. "They'll do anything to get a shot. We were doing a beach scene so we said, 'Come, take your pictures, then please leave.'" Still, says Shyer, "This is the best experience I've ever had. For the first time in my life I'm confident as a filmmaker."

Filming *Alfie* was no less a personal experience for Pope. "I've wanted to remake this movie since I was 13," she says wistfully. "It was just so bittersweet—the guy who's afraid of love." And who may yet have a tough time finding it. **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Law's potential overexposure. He's in not one, not two, but *six* films between September and Christmas. (Oct. 22)



Existential sleuths Hoffman and Tomlin

I ♥ Huckabees

STARRING Dustin Hoffman, Jude Law, Lily Tomlin, Jason Schwartzman, Mark Wahlberg
WRITTEN BY David O. Russell, Jeff Baena
DIRECTED BY David O. Russell

RUSSELL HAS ALWAYS DANGLED ON THE EDGE—FROM THE incest comedy *Spanking the Monkey* to his biggest hit, 1999's prescient Gulf War phantasmagoria, *Three Kings*. But his latest experiment in random raucousness might just be his strangest movie yet. In the ensemble comedy *Huckabees*, Hoffman and Tomlin are existential detectives who track their clients' every move in hopes of helping them answer the Big Questions. When a wussy environmentalist (Schwartzman) enlists their help to better understand his conflict with a rising executive at Huckabees department stores (Law), their bumbling behavior sets off a bizarre chain of events. (Want more? Well, what could be weirder than appearances from Tippi Hedren and Shania Twain?)

"I kept saying to David, 'I'm not the smartest person in the world, but do you even want this to be accessible?'" laughs Hoffman, who reveals that his on-screen Beatlesque hairstyle "is really my hair! Wigs are painful and sticky and hot. I haven't worn one since *Hook*."

Wahlberg, who also appeared in *Kings*, plays firefighter Tommy Corn, and here he finally got a chance to hone his little-seen comedic skills. "If you were handed this script, you wouldn't say that Mark Wahlberg should play the role," he says. "But David doesn't want me doing the same thing over and over again. I was studying [author, former Tibetan monk, and father of Uma] Bob Thurman and Buddhism and *The Jewel Tree of Tibet* for months on end. He's asking actors to do some pretty outrageous stuff." And while he agrees that *Huckabees* is hardly lightweight, he hopes "that people will go to it and think about and debate some of these issues. David's movies are good for me and they are good for film. They are always a learning experience." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Russell's rep. He'll need that great cast to get audiences—and critics—to warm up to a talky comedy with a pretzel plot. (Oct. 1)

Team America: World Police

STARRING The voices of Trey Parker, Matt Stone
WRITTEN BY Trey Parker, Matt Stone, Pam Brady
DIRECTED BY Trey Parker

FIVE YEARS AFTER *SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER & UNCUT*, Parker and Stone are launching their sophomore film effort...involving, uh, marionettes who kick ass and, uh...let Stone explain: "We wanted to f--- up some puppets. The whole idea behind the movie is just f---ing killing puppets." Thus, the duo has made an R-rated, all-marionette action flick about a group of super-agent types that takes satiric jabs at conservatives and liberals (and has already spawned a Drudge Report worrying that it mocks the war on terror). Along the way, Parker and Stone experienced some tangles: First, Paramount got nervous about financing an R-rated puppet movie...so the directors sacrificed their up-front fees. Then the filmmakers discovered the limitations of their actors ("Puppets can't do s---," says Parker), which caused scheduling overruns and budget increases...which forced the two to give up their back-end deal. "So we're just total bitches now," Parker says. But they'll have the film to show for their pains, right? Concludes Parker: "If that sucks, then I just f---ed myself harder than anyone." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Four-word recap: R-rated puppet movie. (Oct. 15)



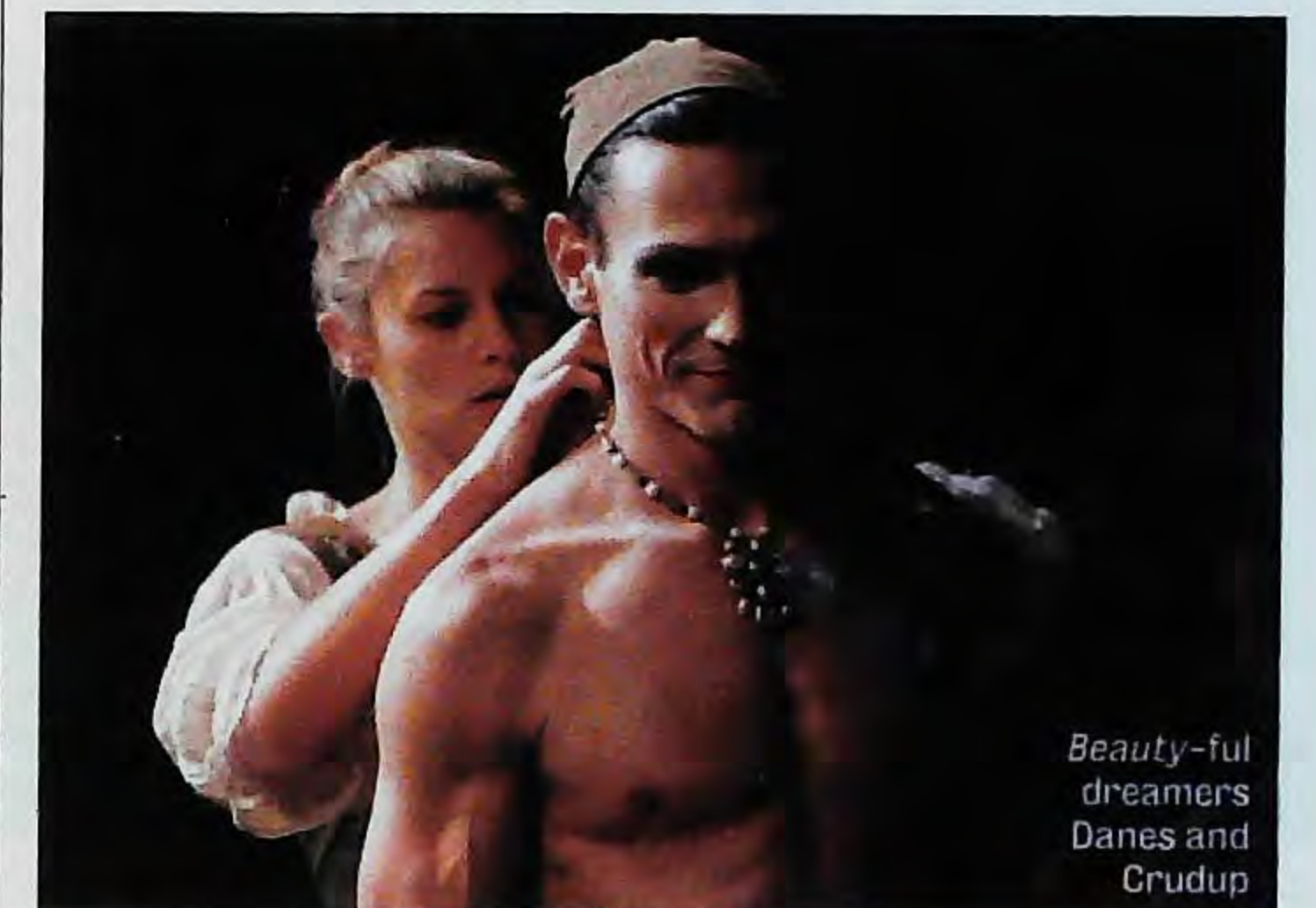
Friday Night Lights

STARRING Billy Bob Thornton, Derek Luke, Tim McGraw, Jay Hernandez
WRITTEN BY David Aaron Cohen, Peter Berg
DIRECTED BY Peter Berg

DIRECTOR BERG (*THE RUNDOWN*) READ H.G. BISSINGER'S beloved best-seller—about a small-town high school football team's emotional quest for the Texas state championship—more than a decade ago and kept tabs on the project for years before finally getting the green light from Überproducer Brian Grazer (*8 Mile*). Of course, it didn't hurt that Berg and Pulitzer Prize winner

Bissinger are cousins, though the familial connection only upped the pressure to deliver a worthy adaptation. Says Berg, "I was pretty conscious of making sure I didn't clown up his book."

Filmed entirely in the sports-crazed Lone Star State, the hard-hitting roles required that the young actors rigorously train for nearly three months. "I was eating about seven to eight chicken breasts a day," says Luke (*Antwone Fisher*), who plays star running back James "Boobie" Miles (Thornton plays his coach). "I never saw my abs before and I was so happy. I was like, Dang, man, they're in there!" **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Could perform *Miracle*-like business, providing the box office boost Billy Bob needs after the embarrassing belly flop of *The Alamo*. (Oct. 15)



Beauty-ful dreamers Danes and Crudup

Stage Beauty

STARRING Billy Crudup, Claire Danes, Rupert Everett, Tom Wilkinson, Ben Chaplin
WRITTEN BY Jeffrey Hatcher
DIRECTED BY Richard Eyre

IT'S AN UNCONVENTIONAL LOVE STORY SET IN THE THEATER with characters spouting iambic pentameter. But don't compare it to *Shakespeare in Love*. "It's lazy to put them in the same category," says Eyre (*Iris*). "*Shakespeare* was a romantic comedy. The ambition of this is to be a comedy, but also to ask questions about sex and gender and identity." *Beauty* follows Ned (Crudup), an actor celebrated for playing female roles. Until King Charles II (Everett) allows women to play their own parts, which provides a boon for Maria (Danes), an aspiring actress who happens to be obsessed with Ned. "I was in a panic because it was complex material," says Danes. "I had an accent to whip up, another period of time to imagine, and it was so layered." To add nuance to the plot's intricacies, Danes, Crudup, and Eyre underwent five weeks of rehearsals. Apparently, all that prep time sparked more than on-screen fireworks for its stars. "There is a relationship," confirms Eyre of Danes and Crudup. "Was it apparent [during filming]? You know what was apparent? These two very intelligent actors, who are witty and attractive, got on very well. Beyond that, I couldn't and wouldn't say more." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Overcoming the inevitable comparisons to *Shakespeare*. (Oct. 8)

Smith and company swim with the fishes in *Shark Tale*



Shark Tale

STARRING The voices of Will Smith, Jack Black, Robert De Niro, Renée Zellweger, Martin Scorsese, Angelina Jolie
WRITTEN BY Michael J. Wilson, Rob Letterman
DIRECTED BY Vicky Jensen, Eric "Bibo" Bergeron, Rob Letterman

LET ME EXPLAIN IT FOR THE READERS, BECAUSE I'M PRETTY smart," says *School of Rock*'s Jack Black. "Not only does *Shark Tale* mean 'shark story,' it also means, like, the back end of a shark. Like 'shark tail.' See?" Gotcha. Actually, once upon a time, this computer-created cartoon confection—the latest from *Shrek* distributor DreamWorks, and the first produced by the studio's Southern California animation unit—went by the more menacing moniker *Sharkslayer*. But during *Shark Tale*'s three-year development swim, the film evolved, thanks in large part to the comic casting of Smith and Black. The *I, Robot* action hero plays Oscar, a little fish whose big mouth gets him in trouble with mobbed-up great whites, led by Don Lino (De Niro, naturally). Oscar finds a buddy in Don Lino's son, Lenny (Black), who not only has no appetite for "the life"...but he's also a vegetarian. "In the beginning," says producer Bill Damaschke, "we set out to

make a movie a little more noir, perhaps a little darker than where we've landed."

Indeed, stuffed to the gills with jokey Mafia movie references, *Shark Tale* sports less naturalistic 3-D animation than, oh, say, *Finding Nemo* (from DreamWorks archenemies Disney and Pixar). While both films were produced concurrently, Damaschke says, "The only thing they have in common is that they both take place underwater."

Shark Tale is "very contemporary. Our reef is a fantasy underwater version of New York or Chicago. If you've seen our character design, our actors have crept very purposely into their alter egos." Case in point: Scorsese's Sykes, a blowhard puffer fish. "I'm not really acting. It's me. The fish even has big eyebrows!" says the director, who improvised many of his scenes with long-time collaborator De Niro.

Black, meanwhile, praises the production for plying him with shrimp scampi burritos and rotisserie chicken during his nine vocal sessions ("I can't bring the rocket sauce without some fuel") and says fans should expect some Tenacious D-ish riffs. "There are some straight-up Jack Blackisms. I'll let you figure out which ones." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** For DreamWorks Animation, which has just filed to go public, a chance to reel in investor confidence. (Oct. 1)

Shall We Dance?

STARRING Richard Gere, Jennifer Lopez, Susan Sarandon, Bobby Cannavale, Stanley Tucci
WRITTEN BY Audrey Wells
DIRECTED BY Peter Chelsom

LAST TIME EW SPOKE TO PETER CHELSOM (*SERENDIPITY*), the director was looking forward to a long vacation in Tuscany after the August premiere of his new movie, a remake of the 1996 graceful Japanese dance number. But then Miramax cut in and reshuffled the release schedule, tossing the director's travel plans out the window ("And I really don't want to be reminded of them right now," he sighs). The party line is that Miramax moved the movie to take better advantage of the holiday awards season. But tongues wag on that the \$50 million movie, in which J. Lo plays a ballroom dance teacher and Gere her willing pupil, is simply a wet noodle. "I swear to you, *to-tally* the opposite is true," says Chelsom. "I've got the test scores right in front of me! It plays through the roof!" The lousy word on the street depresses the director, but hey, things could be worse. "All we hope is that Jennifer doesn't get divorced before Oct. 15." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** After a year of bad press and tabloid fatigue, J. Lo's derriere is on the line. (Oct. 15)

Gere and Lopez go strictly ballroom



A haunted Bale in *The Machinist*

The Machinist

STARRING Christian Bale, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Aitana Sanchez-Gijón, Michael Ironside, John Sharlan
WRITTEN BY Scott Kosar
DIRECTED BY Brad Anderson

THERE'S COMMITTING TO A ROLE, AND THEN THERE'S *COMMITTING TO A ROLE*. To play tormented, sleep-deprived factory worker Trevor Reznik, Bale—normally 6'2", 180 pounds—got down to a ghastly 120 pounds. "I just didn't eat," says the actor, who completed the transformation by sleeping as little as two hours a night. "It becomes easier as your stomach shrinks. You break every [action] down to what is essential because you just do not have the energy to do anything that isn't."

Described by Anderson as a "paranoid psychological thriller" about "a guy battling his guilty conscience," *The Machinist*, which debuted at this year's Sundance festival, takes place in a dark, decaying metropolis that echoes Trevor's horrific mental and physical state. "We tried to create an unidentifiable West Coast city," says Anderson, whose previous effort, 2001's insane-asylum thriller *Session 9*, was also an exercise in creepiness. "So the film has this weird, timeless, placeless quality to it." (Ironically, for financial reasons, the \$5 million movie was shot in the dead of summer in sun-drenched Barcelona.) Long since back to his normal eating and sleeping patterns—not to mention his buff *Batman Begins* bod—Bale is thrilled with the end result. It's a "very atmospheric and mesmerizing movie," he says. "And I'm so proud. There were absolutely no concessions made for the sake of a wider audience. We made the movie we all wanted to make." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Anderson's been on the verge of crossing over from cult-indieville since 1998's *Next Stop Wonderland*. But without that "wider audience," *The Machinist* may not be his ticket. (Oct. 15)



Giamatti and Church go on a grape escape

Sideways

STARRING Paul Giamatti, Thomas Haden Church, Virginia Madsen, Sandra Oh

WRITTEN BY Alexander Payne, Jim Taylor

DIRECTED BY Alexander Payne

PAYNE SAYS HE'S MADE A BUDDY COMEDY. SURE, IN THE same way 1999's wickedly dark *Election* was a teen movie. And the plot, based on the novel by Rex Pickett, sounds Payne-ful: Giamatti (whose role George Clooney reportedly was interested in) is a depressed divorcee who takes his altar-bound friend (Church) on a wine-tasting week that results in bachelor-party debauchery. "I play this guy who's cultivated this ersatz sophistication—I'm a writer! A wine expert!—but I'm just a failed writer and a drunk," says Giamatti. "We'll see if people think that's funny. Though I still say Payne should have gone with Clooney." With his fourth feature, Payne isn't messing too much with the sardonic style that's earned him acclaim—and decent box office. In fact, there may even be a little overlap with 2002's *About Schmidt*. "I show my bare ass in one scene," says Giamatti. "But hopefully not in a disturbing, Kathy Bates-in-a-hot-tub way." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** "Both *Election* and *About Schmidt* doubled their money," says Payne. "As long as I can keep that going, all is well." (Oct. 20)

Undertow

STARRING Jamie Bell, Josh Lucas, Devon Alan, Dermot Mulroney

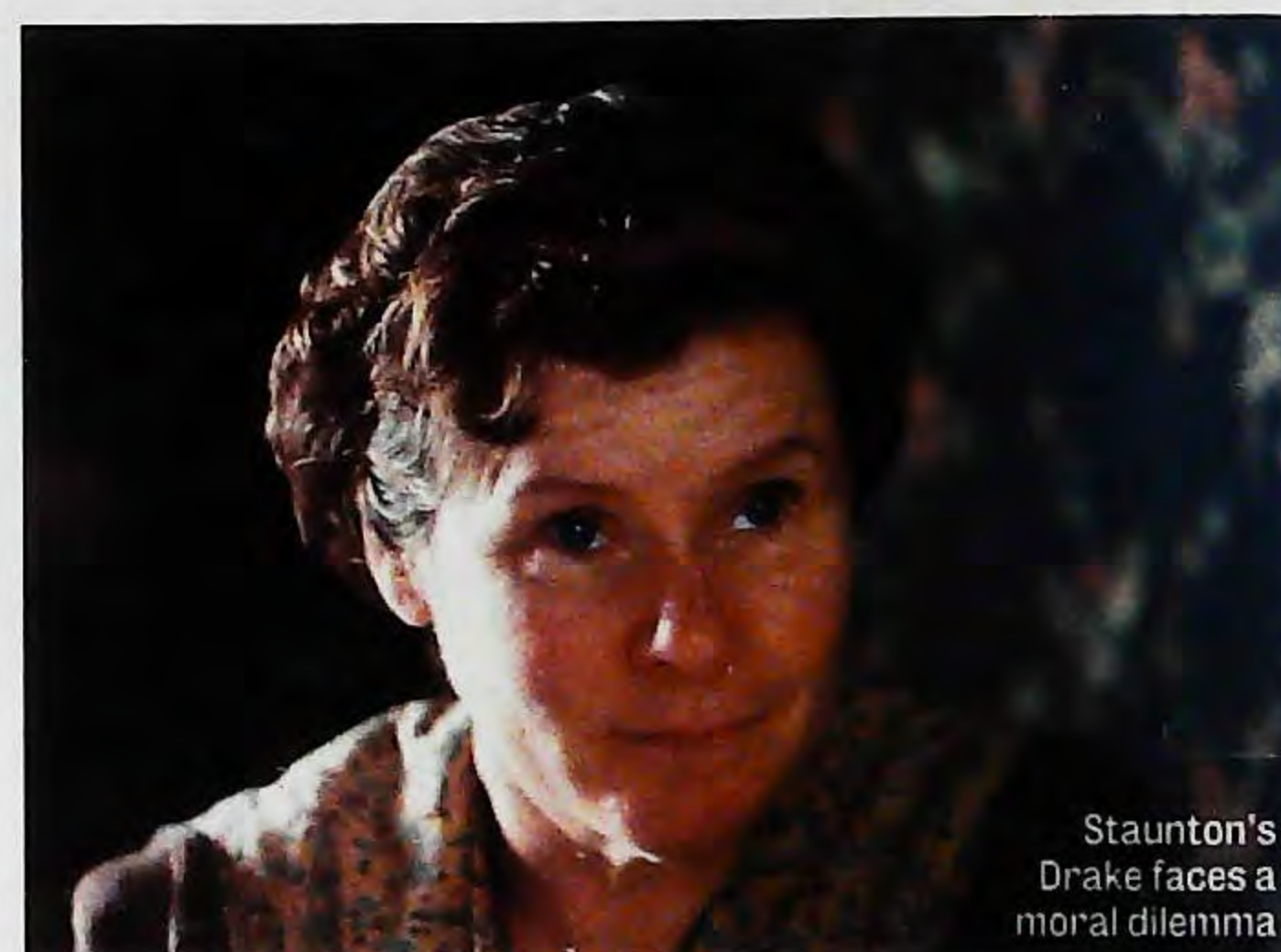
WRITTEN BY David Gordon Green, Joe Conway

DIRECTED BY David Gordon Green

GREEN'S FOLLOW-UP TO HIS LAUDED INDIE *ALL THE REAL GIRLS* features two brothers (Bell and Alan) in the Deep South on the run from their convict uncle (Lucas), who's after their bag of gold coins. Sounds like a tall tale, and that may be the case: The plot originated with a phone worker on a help line for runaways. "He

got a story from this kid that sounded so far out that we all assume it was—it sounded like a Robert Louis Stevenson book," says Green. The tale got passed on until it landed with director (and *Undertow* co-producer) Terrence Malick, who tapped Green to cowrite and direct.

The dark film features Bell in his first starring role since *Billy Elliot*. The 18-year-old recalls his off-kilter casting meeting with Green: "He played me some music [metal-country like 16 Horsepower and minimalist Arvo Part] and said, 'If you can imagine pictures of this music, this is what I want the film to be.' I thought, This guy has got some crazy ideas, and I want to be a part of what he has to do." Ultimately, Green describes *Undertow* as similar to "a boys' adventure novel of the '50s—I wanted the poster to be [someone] holding a lantern and pointing at the staircase. I think it's a little too campy, but that's the vein we were going for." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** From *George Washington* to *Girls*, Green has stepped up with every new film, but the ultra-stylized *Undertow* may divide audiences. (Oct. 29)



Staunton's Drake faces a moral dilemma

Vera Drake

STARRING Imelda Staunton, Phil Davis, Peter Wight, Jim Broadbent

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Mike Leigh

ACTORS IN A MIKE LEIGH JOINT SIGN ON KNOWING NOTHING about the movie they'll make. But for his latest working-class drama, the director granted an exception for Staunton, telling the character actress (*Shakespeare in Love*) that her saintly London matriarch leads a stealth life as an abortionist. "He just said that," says Staunton, "and it's gonna be in the '50s, and that's all you need to know. But he also said there's not going to be a moral. Rather than pro or against, we're showing it as it was." At just under a million dollars, the film's budget was small even by Leigh's standards. "My last picture, *All or Nothing*, was not a commercial success," he says, "so that affected the backing for *Drake*. But then, it's never easy making pictures when the deal is total freedom." For Leigh, total freedom involved six months of improvisation and research for the actors to develop their roles. "It feels luxurious but never indulgent," Staunton says. "Ask any actor who's worked with him, they'll say it's the only way to work." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** An Oscar push for Staunton. And, apparently, the budget of Leigh's next film. (Oct. 10)

PUTTING THE "F"

BACK IN FREEDOM



TeamAmerica.com



Gellar goes
mano a mano
with evil

— The Grudge

STARRING Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jason Behr, Bill Pullman, Clea DuVall, William Mapother

WRITTEN BY Stephen Susco

DIRECTED BY Takashi Shimizu

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, A JAPANESE HORROR REMAKE IS being directed by its original Japanese director. "The studio wanted to bring Japanese taste to a Hollywood movie," says Shimizu through a translator. Gellar illuminates: "In America we usually have this idea of horror movies—the girl in the tank top, running in the woods," she says. "One of the things I always loved about Japanese filmmaking is how different it is—it's nonlinear; it leaves so much to the imagination. [Americans] like to say this movie is 'The Ring with a house,' but it's not, it's more complicated than that."

In a plot taken from Shimizu's 2003 creeper *Ju-on*, Gellar plays a caregiver in Tokyo who's sent to check in on the ultimate haunted house, where people die in a rage and leave behind a curse. Or something like that: Shimizu is wary of making things too clear in the movie. "I thought the remake of *The Ring* was good, but I think it had too much explanation, and that made the movie less scary," he says. He's also been going back and forth with Sony over how much gore the movie should have: First it was not enough, then it was too much. But he laughs it off—"some stupid producers!" it turns out, is one of the few phrases he's learned to say in English. **WHAT'S AT STAKE** If *The Grudge* is the next *Ring*, then Shimizu is the next Gore Verbinski, and he'd better improve those English skills fast. (Oct. 22)

— Taxi

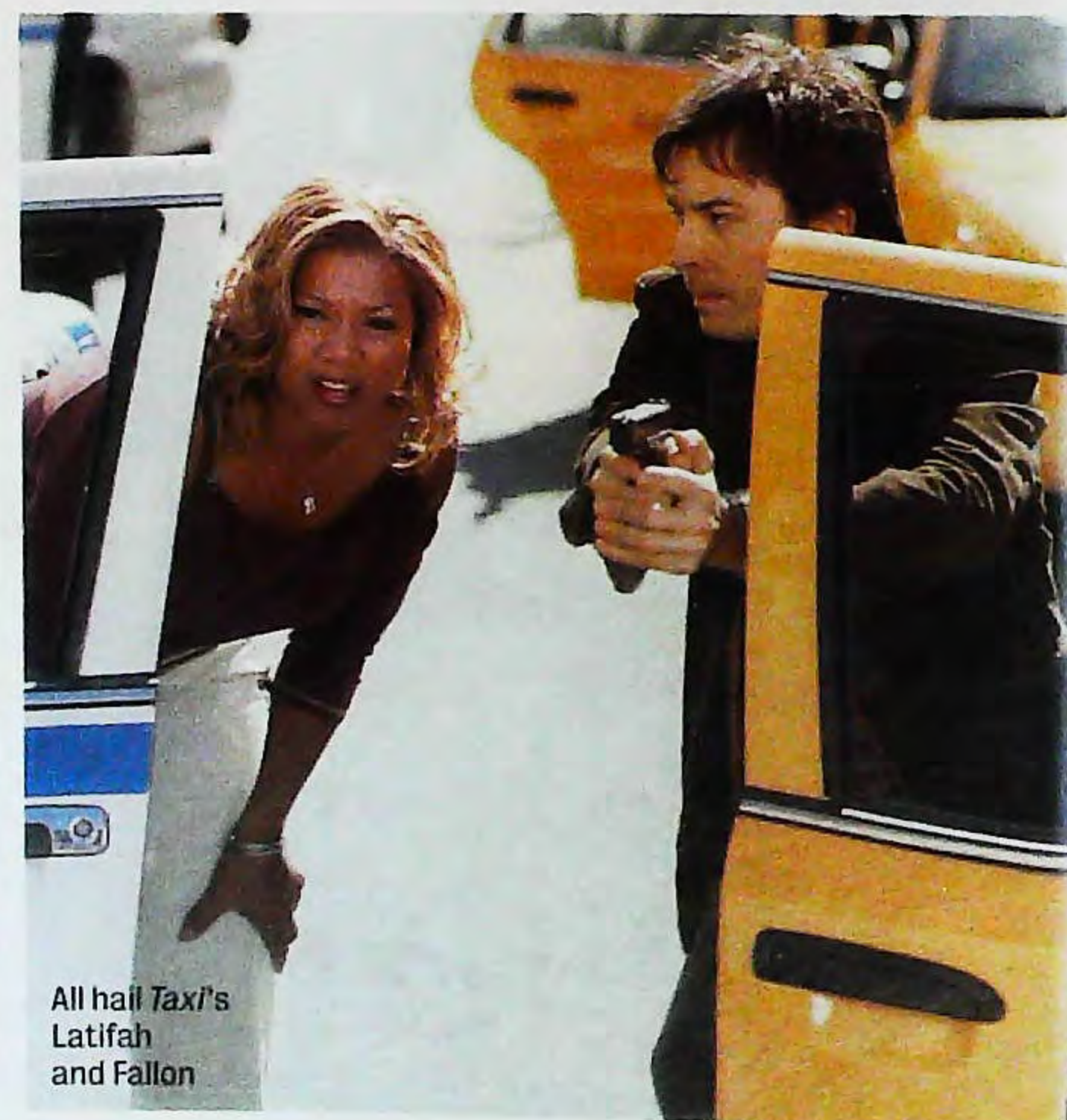
STARRING Jimmy Fallon, Queen Latifah, Gisele Bündchen, Ann-Margret, Jennifer Esposito

WRITTEN BY Jim Kouf, Robert Ben Garant, Thomas Lennon

DIRECTED BY Tim Story

NO, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'RE THINKING—BUT WHEN JIMMY Fallon first got the screenplay, the same thing crossed his mind. "I was looking for Jim Ignatowski references," he says, "but to the teen audience I don't think anyone will even know what that name means." Translation: This *Taxi* bears no relation to what Fallon calls "my favorite sitcom ever" (which featured Christopher Lloyd as Rev. Jim Ignatowski). Rather, it's based on one of France's all-time top movies, a Marseilles-set flick from 1998. In the U.S. version, bad-driving cop Fallon enlists Queen Latifah and her souped-up New York City cab to nab a band of Brazilian bank robbers—who happen to be supermodels led by catwalker Bündchen. Quips Fallon: "Based on a true story."

Director Story (*Barbershop*) calls the action comedy "kind of like *Rush Hour*, a little bit of *Midnight Run*, and then a little bit of *48 HRS.*" Which meant tons of improv by Fallon, Latifah, and Ann-Margret, who plays Fallon's boozy mom. Not to mention tons of car chases and shoot-outs. "It was just like candy," says Fallon, who left his *SNL* "Weekend Update" days behind this spring. "Every day you're on set you're just like, 'Okay, what's next? Oh, cool, I get to shoot a gun?! Great! I get to run while I'm shooting it?! Awesome!'" But the biggest commotion came when fans swarmed the movie's set last fall to catch a glimpse of its sexy star. And we don't mean Gisele. "I'm going 'Jimmy Fallon?!'" Story says. "I mean, you know, the guy's not ugly, but I was like, 'Jimmy Fallon?!'" **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Fallon's film career: Is he the next Will Ferrell? (Oct. 8)



All hail *Taxi*'s
Latifah
and Fallon



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FINDING NEVERLAND

NOVEMBER
FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

STARRING Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet,
Radha Mitchell, Dustin Hoffman, Julie Christie

WRITTEN BY David Magee

DIRECTED BY Marc Forster



A little sweetness can be a beautiful thing. Too much, however, and you've got yourself a Robin Williams clip reel. Of course, the goal is to make audiences weep like little girls chopping onions and not have them resent you for it in the morning. That's the idea if it's Academy Awards you're after. And since *Finding Neverland* may wind up being Miramax's best hope for statuettes this year, you better believe that's the idea.

Fortunately, *Neverland* features a stud farm of Oscar pedigree. In addition to *Monster's Ball* director Forster and three-time nominee Winslet, there's Depp, hot on the heels of his Best Actor nod as Captain Jack, playing prominent Scottish playwright J. M. Barrie, a misunderstood, boyishly mischievous eccentric. In other words, a character right in Depp's wheelhouse. The film traces Barrie's touching friendship with a widowed mother (Winslet) and her sons who inspired Barrie's masterpiece, *Peter Pan*.

Neverland has been awaiting release for over a year, hindered by Universal's 2003 *Peter Pan*, which was contractually allowed to bow first. Now that it's opening, the film may steam up some literary scholars who argue that Barrie's life may not have been as pure as *Neverland*. "There were a couple of ways you

could go with Barrie," says Depp. "One was riding on the coattails of all the negative hearsay. The possibility that maybe he was a little sideways with the children. But f---, that's an obvious way to go, isn't it?"

Winslet, who, it should be noted, played Wendy in a stage production of *Peter Pan* at age 15, says Depp was perfectly cast: "He's like Peter Pan." In fact, Depp got along so well with one of the child actors, 12-year-old Freddie Highmore (who plays Peter), that he helped him land the role of Charlie in his and Tim Burton's upcoming *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Winslet adds that during one stuffy dinner scene in the film, Depp secretly rigged a handheld whoopie-cushion device that had the child actors nervously giggling exactly as the script called for. "The boys didn't know whether to laugh or to cry," she says. When reminded of the whoopie-cushion incident, Depp cracks up, then deadpans, "There are certain elements of boyhood we can't escape. And farts will always be funny." And in the right hands, maybe even a little bit sweet.

WHAT'S AT STAKE Depp's long-overdue first Oscar. (Nov. 12)

Surviving Christmas

STARRING Ben Affleck, James Gandolfini, Christina Applegate, Catherine O'Hara, Stephen Root

WRITTEN BY Jeffrey Ventimilia, Joshua Sternin, Deborah Kaplan, Harry Elfont

DIRECTED BY Mike Mitchell

OVER THE PAST YEAR, AFFLECK HAD PEOPLE LAUGHING AT him for *Gigli*. But this year, he's hoping people will laugh with him for the farcical *Christmas*, in which he plays an obnoxious rich businessman whose psychiatrist advises him to return to his childhood home for the holiday. Finding another family living there, he pays them to act out an ideal yuletide with him, driving Dad (Gandolfini) insane and falling for the daughter (Applegate) in the process. Though he has loved doing broad comedy while hosting *Saturday Night Live*, the actor found studio heads nervous about whether they should dare put *Daredevil* in charge of getting belly laughs. "They would say, 'It's not that we don't think you're funny, we're sure you are funny,'" says Affleck. "Which is just a patronizing way of saying 'We have no f---ing idea if you're funny.'"

Affleck's hoping *Christmas* will convince more studios that he can joke around. "I've completely exhausted myself with action movies, it's just so incredibly boring to me and not something I want to do anymore," he says, adding that comedy has always been his goal. As evidence, he cites writing the hilarious scene in *Good Will Hunting* where he loudly impersonates Will at a recruiting meeting stuffed into a too-small suit. "It doesn't even fit in the movie," he laughs. "But I wanted to play it so much, we just put it in there." Well, it *did* get him an Oscar... **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Affleck's future comedy roles. Besides that, he needs a hit after a trio of underperforming films. (Nov. 12)



(From left) Alex Désert, Affleck, and Gandolfini

Mr. Incredible breaks out of the 'burbs

The Incredibles

STARRING The voices of Craig T. Nelson, Holly Hunter, Samuel L. Jackson, Jason Lee, Wallace Shawn

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Brad Bird

THE TRAILER PROCLAIMS, "FROM THE CREATORS OF *Toy Story*." And it's true, *The Incredibles* hails from Pixar, the Northern California computer-animation shop that also turned out (in partnership with Disney) the hugely successful *Monsters, Inc.* and *Finding Nemo*.

But writer-director Bird had nothing to do with Pixar's earlier movies. He's a newbie, an outsider—or at least he was when he came to Pixar to start *Incredibles* four years ago, a typical gestation time at the studio. His trump calling card: He'd directed and

cowritten *The Iron Giant*, a critically lauded, largely hand-drawn 1999 'toon that Warner Bros. dumped on the market to a miserable \$23.2 million domestic gross. "They were closing down their [feature] animation division as we were making it," says Bird. "We didn't have any champions. Had I been more experienced, I would have seen that early."

In the aftermath, Bird relocated to Pixar, taking *Incredibles* with him—an idea he'd initially pitched at Warner, home of the *Batman* and *Superman* franchises. The premise: a superhero clan that's lost its mojo. Hounded by lawsuits, Mr. Incredible (Nelson, best known from TV's *Coach*) and his wife, Elastigirl (Hunter), retreat to an incognito suburban existence as Bob and Helen Parr—at least until an archenemy named Syndrome (Lee) pulls them and their three kids back into action. "Brad was really interested in that tension between the two worlds," says Hunter.

"And the dynamics of a family where, if there's a fight, it goes into Greek dimensions very quickly."

Pixar welcomed Bird aboard wholeheartedly, despite his inexperience with full-on CG animation. According to producer John Walker, who also worked on *Giant*, "They put us in bubble wrap so we wouldn't hurt ourselves. They surrounded us with a lot of very, very experienced people." Bird proceeded to drive Pixar's resident technical wizards batty by coming up with scenes full of things extremely difficult to do well in CG: billowing supersuits, convincingly weighty muscles, and—toughest of all—hair that could blow in the wind or undulate underwater. "I felt like the computers had their own agenda," says Bird. "To make things look small, plastic, clean, and weightless." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Whether DreamWorks' mighty *Shrek 2* is beatable in Oscar's Best Animated Feature race (maybe) or toppable at the box office (almost certainly not). (Nov. 5)

Christmas With the Kranks

STARRING Tim Allen, Jamie Lee Curtis, Dan Aykroyd, Julie Gonzalo, Cheech Marin

WRITTEN BY Chris Columbus

DIRECTED BY Joe Roth

ALLEN AND CURTIS PLAY EMPTY NESTERS WHOSE OVER-the-top devotion to Christmas cheer makes them the toast of their suburban Illinois town each December. But when their only child (Gonzalo) breaks the news that she won't be home for the holidays, the crushed Kranks make like Scrooges and forgo their annual ritual—much to the chagrin of their disgruntled community.

Based on John Grisham's best-seller *Skipping Christmas*, the comedy was adapted by *Home Alone* director Columbus, who then pitched helming duties to Revolution Studios chief Joe Roth (*America's Sweethearts*). Once on board, and with his Grisham-approved first-choice leads in place, the director had to figure out how to create a winter wonderland under the toasty California sun. "Because I produced the Oscars, I wasn't able to start shooting while it was still winter in the Midwest, so we decided to build an entire neighborhood on a parking lot," says Roth, noting that the snow-covered set—the length of two football fields—is now the largest staged exterior neighborhood in Hollywood.

For Curtis, there was only one thing better than frolicking in a holiday bubble: her comedic chemistry with Allen. "The truth is, we make a really good married couple," she says. In fact, Curtis and Co. enjoyed themselves so much that there's already talk of sequels. "This could certainly be a franchise," says Roth. "Summer vacation? Europe? Halloween? You could hit them all. [But] the audience has to tell us that." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** That potential *Kranks* franchise. Curtis is hot, thanks to last year's *Freaky Friday*, but Allen's '90s-era star may have faded. Still: Remember *The Santa Clause*? (Nov. 24)



Curtis hams it up in *Kranks*



Zellweger irons out the details in *Jones*

Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason

THOUGH 2001'S *BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY* WAS A BOTH-SIDES-of-the-pond hit (grossing more than \$280 million worldwide), convincing Zellweger to return for another go-round was a tough sell. "I wasn't sure that her story hadn't already been told," says the actress, who earned a Best Supporting Actress statuette for her performance in *Cold Mountain* during the course of filming *Reason*. "I was leery about the idea of making a sequel. Usually, it's not motivated from an artistic perspective...and the idea of compromising this character terrified me."

What finally persuaded Zellweger to put on Bridget's knee-high boots again (not to mention her extra pounds) were the fans—perfect strangers coming up to her asking about a sequel. "I was surprised. It started to make me think that there might be some value in following up." The actress also saw some parallels between

STARRING Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, Jim Broadbent, Jacinda Barrett

WRITTEN BY Helen Fielding, Andrew Davies, Richard Curtis, Adam Brooks

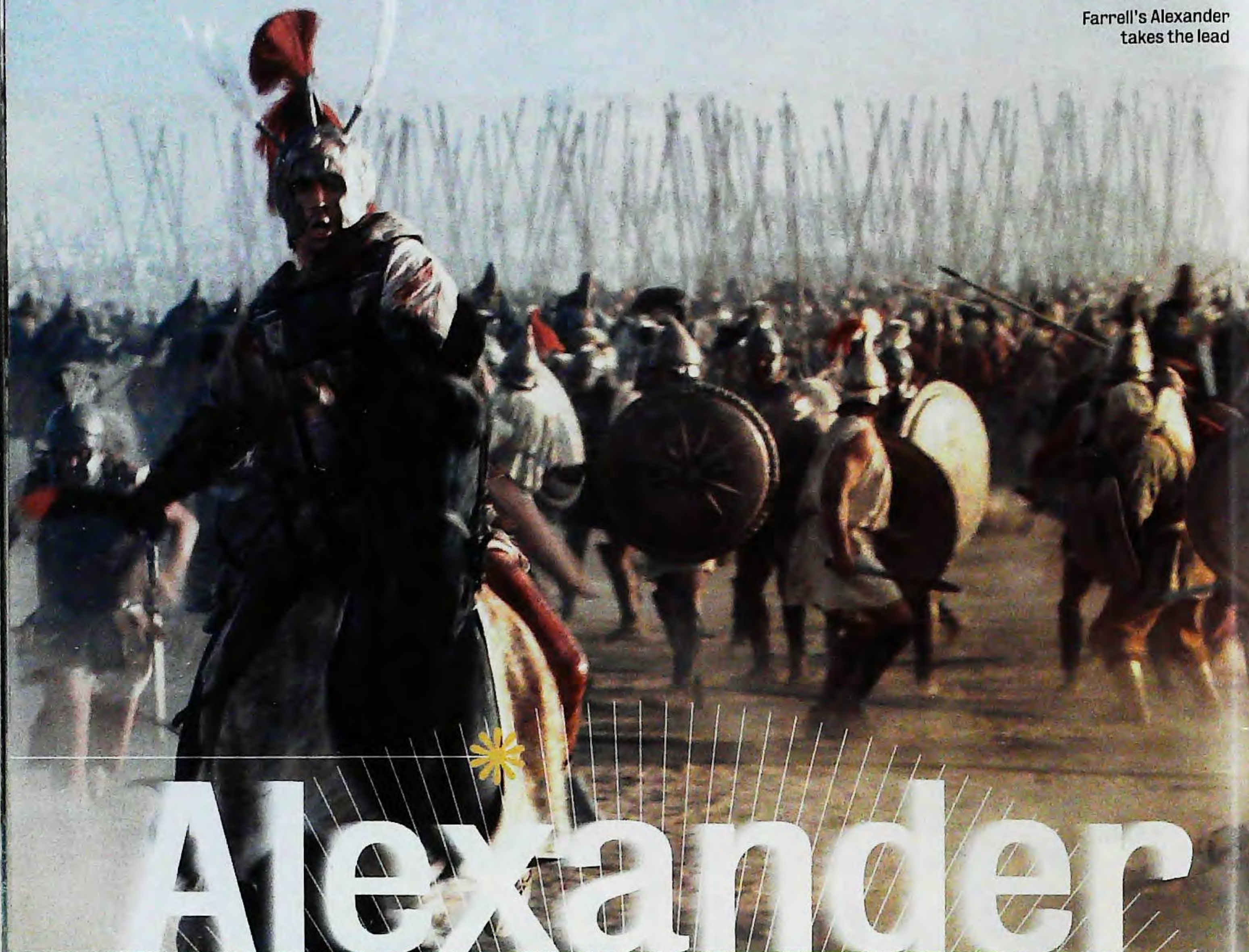
DIRECTED BY Beeban Kidron

her own life and Ms. Jones': "She's a little bit more grown-up, a little less naive, a little bit more assertive. It fit nicely because obviously I'm not the same person [I was] either."

But fans needn't worry that their favorite fretful female is getting (gasp!) mature on them. "It's a completely comedic exploration of what it's like to be in a relationship," says director Kidron (whose

last notable feature was the drag comedy *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*). "And Bridget goes on some wild adventures before she works out that finding the perfect man does not mean you ride into the sunset." Also returning are Grant and Firth as Bridget's caddish and gentlemanly beaux, respectively. "Colin is indeed the man that every woman should marry," says Kidron. "And Hugh is like the chocolate you shouldn't eat."

Speaking of eating, this time Zellweger says she approached her weight gain more healthfully. "I saw [the documentary] *Super Size Me* and I was terrified about all the long-term damage the guy was doing by gaining so much weight," she says. "Boy, I had to turn down the volume when those parts came on." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Reviews for *Bridget's* literary follow-up were tepid. And Bridget's neuroses may not be as lovable now that she's got a boyfriend. (Nov. 19)

Farrell's Alexander
takes the lead

Millions

STARRING Alex Etel, Lewis Owen McGibbon,
James Nesbitt, Daisy Donovan

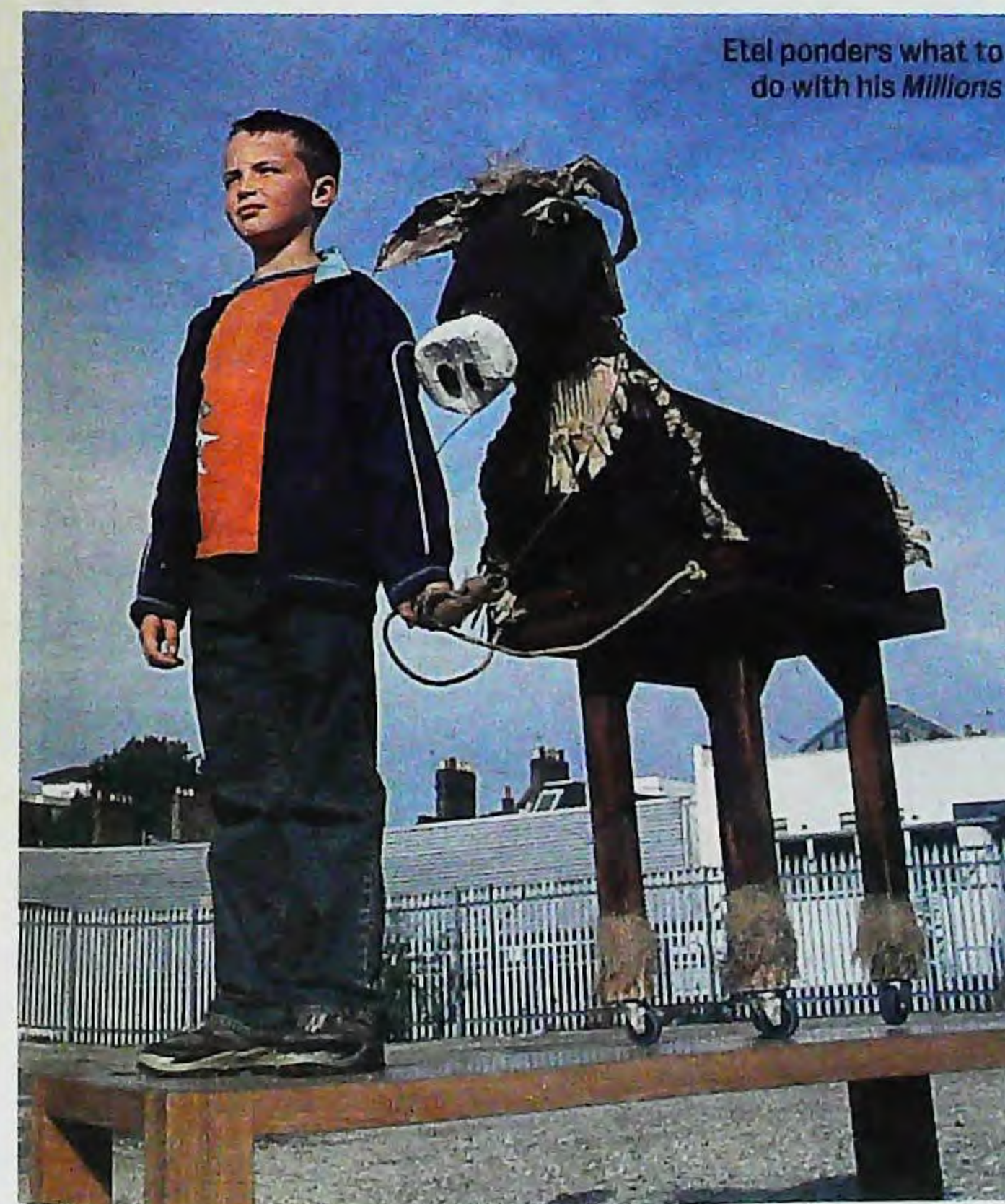
WRITTEN BY Frank Cottrell Boyce

DIRECTED BY Danny Boyle

FROM THE DIRECTOR WHO BROUGHT MOVIEGOERS THE greedy corpse-butchers in *Shallow Grave*, the heroin junkies of *Trainspotting*, and the lethal zombies of *28 Days Later* comes...a heartwarming, life-affirming story of brotherhood? Even Boyle was slightly surprised he could raise the £5 million (more than \$9 million) budget. "You can understand somebody financing a film [of mine] that features drugs, violence, and sex, but we don't have any of those things in this one," he says.

Instead, *Millions* is the story of 9-year-old Anthony (McGibbon) and 7-year-old Damian (Etel), whose mother has recently died. Their world is undone again when they find a suitcase filled with money and conflict erupts: Anthony has lucrative commercial fantasies, but Damian wants to help the poor.

As with most movies featuring children, casting was critical. Boyle did it the old-fashioned way: He saw nearly every kid in northwest England, a process he calls "kissing frogs." Toughest to cast was the role of Damian. "It sounds like I'm making this up, [but when Etel] walked in the room I thought, 'That's him,' even before he'd read a word," says Boyle. "I felt exactly the same about him as I felt about Kelly Macdonald in *Trainspotting*, who'd never acted before. I still saw 1,000 other frogs, but he was the prince." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Can Boyle do Spielberg? Even he admits, "It's a leap of faith." (Nov. 24)



STARRING Colin Farrell, Angelina Jolie, Val Kilmer,
Rosario Dawson, Anthony Hopkins

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Oliver Stone

OLIVER STONE HAS BEEN TRYING TO MAKE A MOVIE ABOUT Alexander the Great for more than a decade. He's thought about it, sweated over the script, and delved into countless hours of research about the brilliant Macedonian conqueror who ruled most of the known world by the age of 30. None of that, though, made the actual filming—with a budget of \$150 million-plus—any easier. To do it right, Stone took his cast around the world, globe-trotting from Morocco to London to Thailand, with wee side trips to India and Paris wedged in.

"I was talking to Jared [Leto, who plays Alexander's friend and sometime lover Hephaestion] about it in London doing looping," says Dawson, who plays Roxane, Alexander's first wife. "And we were sitting there going 'Oh, my God! It's over! We survived it!'" There was a lot to survive. Blistering sandstorms halted shoot-

ing in Morocco. Budget problems delayed construction of the sets in London. The tabloids trailed the production, filing endless reports on who was sleeping with whom. And with horses and elephants and foot soldiers mixing it up throughout the film, there were major injuries to stuntmen and stars—including Farrell, who tripped on some stairs at the end of the production, fractured his foot, and had to finish the movie in a cast.

Though the end result is the most complicated film Stone has done since 1991's *JFK*, don't look for *Alexander* to function as a contemporary allegory. "I don't make movies to join a political examination, or give my day-by-day look at what's going on," says Stone. "I like the anonymity of film. This is a mass collaboration. It's like building a ship or a cathedral. An imaginary building of the mind." The hot-blooded director found a perfect partner in his fierce star: You could practically see Stone and Farrell falling head over heels for each other on the set. "It was such a monumental endeavor, and Oliver's intentions were so noble everyone was affected," says Farrell. "He's a f---ing champion, Oliver. A man amongst bulls---ters." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** The future of sword-and-sandal epics. It's gotta be better than *Troy*, right? Right? (Nov. 5)

SpongeBob
(left) and
Patrick go
bananas



The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie

STARRING The voices of Tom Kenny, Jeffrey Tambor, Scarlett Johansson, Alec Baldwin

WRITTEN BY Stephen Hillenburg, Derek Dryman, Tim Hill,
Kent Osborne, Aaron Springer, Paul Tibbitt

DIRECTED BY Stephen Hillenburg

WHEN HE SIGNED ON FOR SPONGEBOB'S FIRST big-screen outing, Tambor had no idea he would become a 'toon titan. "I didn't know how pervasive it was in our culture," he says. "I was in an elevator with this kid recently. So I told him, 'You know, I'm going to be in the SpongeBob movie,' and...well...not since James Dean, you know? It was something similar." Tambor earns that iconic status in Sponge lore by lending his pipes to an undersea monarch with serious issues. "I play King Neptune, this overweening control freak," says Tambor. "He's also somewhat follically impaired." And he's also lost his crown, so SpongeBob and his starfish buddy Patrick go on a mission to retrieve it.

For his part, Tambor was happy to get some 'toon time—but he's always appreciated the power of ink and pen. "My first cartoon, I had to be carried out crying," he says. "It was *Bambi*. It's like the great American wound: the death of Bambi's mother. 'Run, Bambi, run!'" Is he trying to tell us that SpongeBob gets shot by a hunter? "No, no. No one will be carried crying out of this movie. You have my guarantee." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Not all TV 'toons are box office smashes (think *Disney's Teacher's Pet*), but c'mon, how many have ol' Bob's see-worthiness? (Nov. 19)

STARRING Tom Hanks, Nona Gaye, Peter Scolari, Michael Jeter, Eddie Deezen

WRITTEN BY Robert Zemeckis, William Broyles Jr.

DIRECTED BY Robert Zemeckis

FOUR YEARS BACK, HANKS AND ZEMECKIS TOOK A BUNGEE jump with *Cast Away*, gambling that audiences would line up to watch Hanks talk on and on to a volleyball. The happy result: \$234 million in domestic grosses and Hanks' fifth Oscar nomination. Now the star and director are again leaping into the unknown—abetted by *Cast Away* screenwriter Broyles—with an all-CG version of Chris Van Allsburg's 1985 storybook about a boy whisked away by train to Santa's native land on Christmas Eve. "You couldn't do this live-action," says Zemeckis. "I mean, you could, but it would be the most expensive film of all time, and it still wouldn't look right."

Looking "right," for Zemeckis, meant meticulously emulating Van Allsburg's somber, painterly illustrations, which have helped the book sell more than 5 million copies. To find the cinematic equivalent of their slightly eerie vibe, Zemeckis turned to a still-

evolving branch of CG technology called "performance capture" and pushed it in new directions on a reported budget of \$165 million. "It's not animation. It's *real*," says Zemeckis of the result. The actors were filmed on bare soundstages with their faces and bodies covered in reflective dots. Cameras picked up the dots as points in space, then transposed the actors' movements directly into CG figures (which should look all the more vivid in a 3-D IMAX version scheduled to open the same day as regular prints).

Hanks' old *Bosom Buddies* costar, Scolari, plays a kid called "lonely boy," while Hanks became a computer-age Peter Sellers by acting out multiple virtual roles. He's immediately recognizable as the mustachioed train conductor. But he's incognito doing the movements for the doubting little boy, the boy's father, a spooky, broken-nosed hobo (a role the producers initially considered pitching to the late Marlon Brando), and Santa Claus himself. Says Hanks of his five-role tour of duty: "The only thing that threw me is there's no costumes to play off of. You wear them one day so they can digitize them and laser-scan them—but that's it. You gotta pretend." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Hanks' chance to chug into holiday-blockbuster territory à la Jim Carrey in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. But is he as appealing in new-fangled CG as he might be in old-fashioned makeup? (Nov. 10)

The Polar Express



Conductor Hanks, one of the actor's many CG roles



Bad boy Bernal faces his demons

Bad Education

STARRING Gael García Bernal, Fele Martínez, Daniel Giménez-Cacho, Lluís Homar, Javier Cámara

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Pedro Almodóvar

BREAKING NEWS: THE TALK TO HER DIRECTOR HAS DISCOVERED the next Julia Roberts! Bernal plays a transvestite still reeling from the sexual advances of a priest that he endured as a boy, and does the dude ever look like one famous woman. "With the curvy wig and those lips, his face was very similar to Roberts," agrees Almodóvar. "But Gael told me he saw the face of his mother, the Mexican actress [Patricia Bernal], and he found that creepy."

When Almodóvar wrote a draft 10 years ago, he was still exorcising demons left over from his Catholic-school upbringing. "When I picked the story back up, the priests and the terrible education were no longer a ghost. It's maturity that has allowed me to make a film that isn't trying to take revenge." With homages to everything from James Cain novels to Barbara Stanwyck's '40s-style sunglasses in *Double Indemnity*, the director instead traces noir back to its roots. Shot last summer during Spain's record heat wave, he overcame child actors and nightmare location scouts. "All the schools in Spain belong to the Catholic Church, and they wouldn't give Pedro Almodóvar a drink in the desert," he laughs. "It's like when mothers talk about their children who've made them suffer but they love as well. This is a film that made me suffer enormously, but I still adore it." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Disappointing fans. A dip into the chillier world of noir might leave them cold. (Nov. 19)

Birth

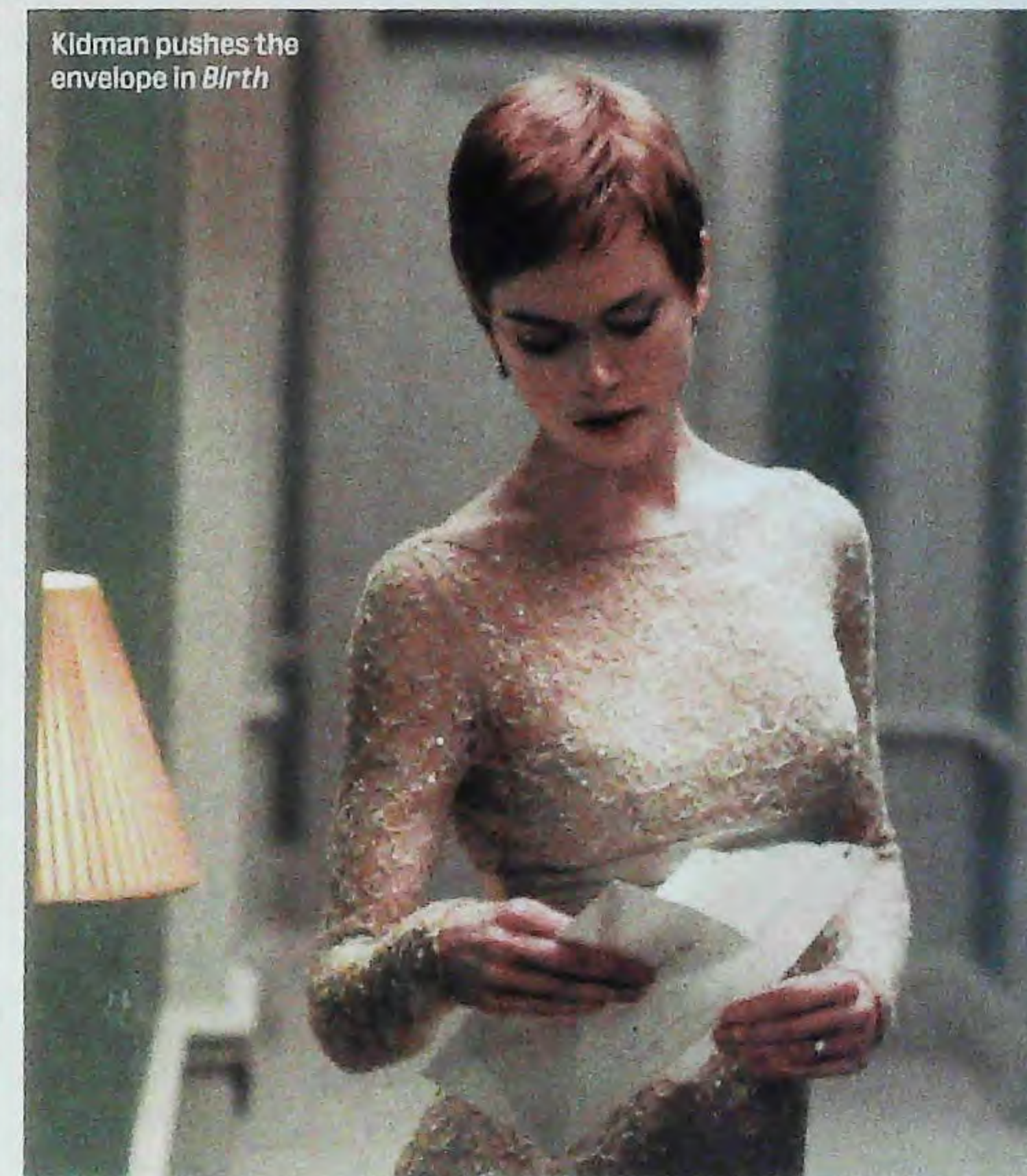
STARRING Nicole Kidman, Cameron Bright, Danny Huston, Lauren Bacall, Arliss Howard

WRITTEN BY Milo Addica, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jonathan Glazer
DIRECTED BY Jonathan Glazer

GLAZER (WHO MADE 2001'S ACCLAIMED *SEXY BEAST*) WAS struck by the idea for *Birth* one day while preparing tea for a friend. He became so distracted by the concept that he never finished putting the kettle on to boil. The actual execution of the film turned out to be more complex than heating up water. A year and a half of production has been marred by delays and complications. "It's been a long haul," Glazer admits of the reshoots and months of editing. "The film needed to be thought about carefully, and I couldn't join the dots."

The dots are as follows: A widow (Kidman) is about to remarry (Huston, who also stars in September's *Silver City*), when a child (played by Bright) approaches her and informs her that he is, in fact, older than he looks—way older. Turns out he's her husband reincarnated. "It's about a woman who has yet to confront what she's lost," says Glazer. "And this thing that she's lost she finds in a child." Despite the time issues, Glazer, who's still in the editing room, says he hasn't lost interest in the drama. "It's still growing and moving and changing," he says. "It's been a tough one." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** The sophomore attempt of a lauded director, fronted by an A-list actress, *Birth* needs to be better than a labor of love. (Nov. 5)

Kidman pushes the envelope in *Birth*





Brosnan and Hayek know the art of the steal

After the Sunset

STARRING Pierce Brosnan, Salma Hayek, Woody Harrelson, Don Cheadle, Naomie Harris

WRITTEN BY Paul Zbyszewski, Craig Rosenberg

DIRECTED BY Brett Ratner

I AM LYING BESIDE SALMA HAYEK IN THE MOST BEAUTIFUL revealing bikini, sipping mojitos," says Brosnan from the set of his caper comedy *After the Sunset*. "But we're really in a car park in Culver City." Shooting on the \$50 million-plus *Sunset* wrapped in the Caribbean last winter, but here's Brosnan in late July being filmed catching some rays in a SoCal parking lot. Director Ratner insists, "I'm not reshooting anything that I'd already shot—I'm adding some stuff." As Ratner tells it, he recently showed a rough cut of the film—about a jewel thief (Brosnan) who retires to the Bahamas with his wife and partner in crime (Hayek), where one last diamond-pilfering opportunity materializes—to his pal writer-director Jeff Nathanson, who penned *Rush Hour 2*. "He said, 'I have some funny s--- to write...some scenes for you.' He's,

like, so f---ing funny. So I'm like, 'Yeah!' So he wrote it, I gave it to [New Line], and they wrote me the check." So a new post-big-heist scene was added to the script (*After After the Sunset?*) and the cast gathered again in the less exotic, makeshift Los Angeles set.

From the sound of it, though, the reshoot—sorry, er, new stuff—was just a drop in the ocean. Ratner signed on in August 2003 after John Stockwell (*Blue Crush*) departed over reported creative differences. "Thank God...otherwise we would have been up the creek without a paddle," says Brosnan. "He is a force to be reckoned with, Brett. He is just a sweet bad boy." Not unlike Brosnan's benevolent burglar, Max, who in the course of events is trailed by his FBI nemesis (Harrelson) and confronts a local hood (Cheadle). "It starts where other heist movies end," says Ratner. "It usually ends on the beach with the umbrella drink, right? This movie starts there." Brosnan, meanwhile, knows what we're thinking: "This character is not as austere as Thomas Crown was," he says, noting the similarities between this and his role in the 1999 thieving thriller. "This guy is much more accessible—he just loves stealing things."

WHAT'S AT STAKE If Brosnan does hang up his 007 tux, a successful *Sunset* would start his post-spy career with a bang. (Nov. 12)

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Spacey takes Bosworth for a dip

Beyond the Sea

STARRING Kevin Spacey, Kate Bosworth, John Goodman, Brenda Blethyn, Bob Hoskins

WRITTEN BY Credits not final

DIRECTED BY Kevin Spacey

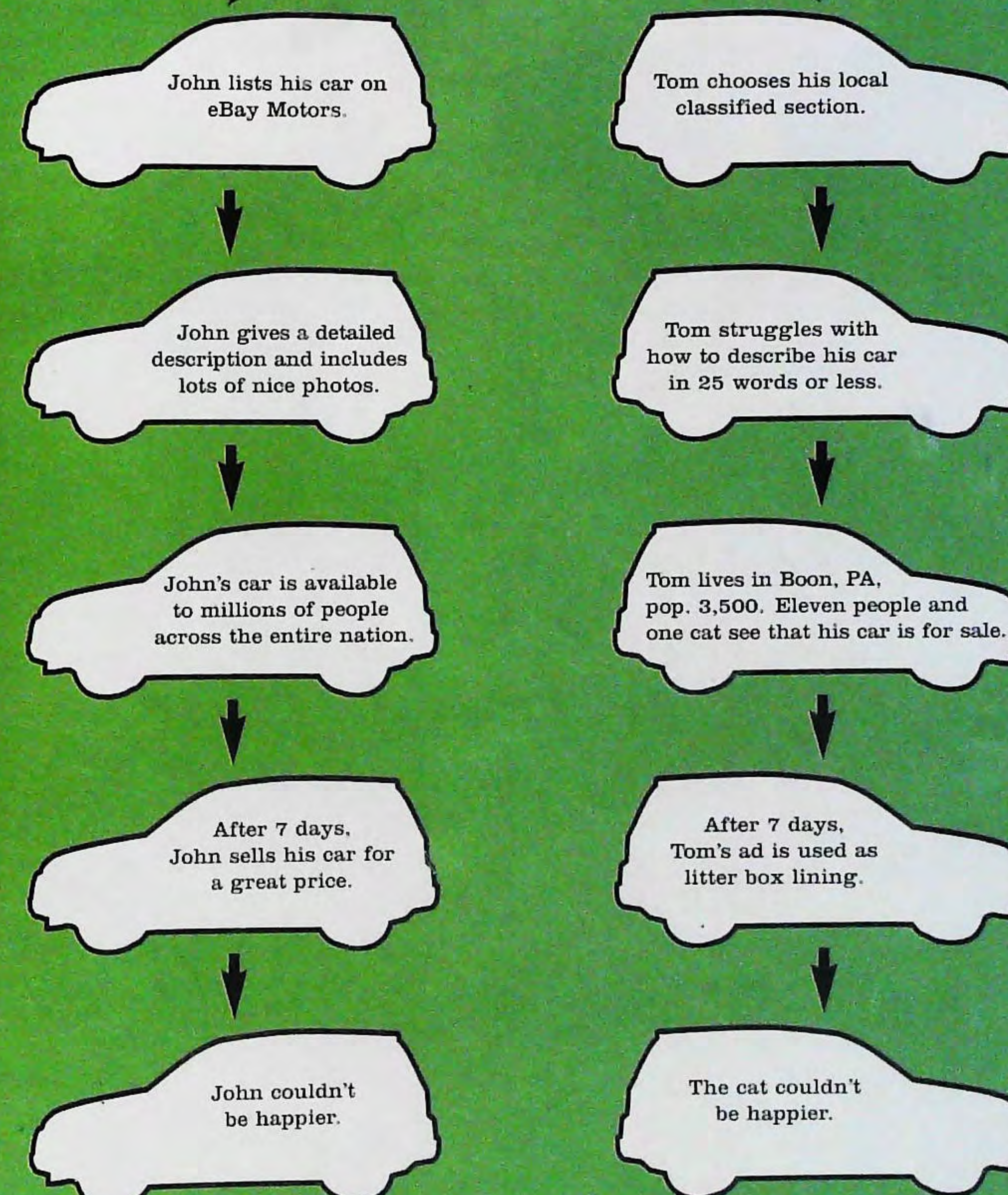
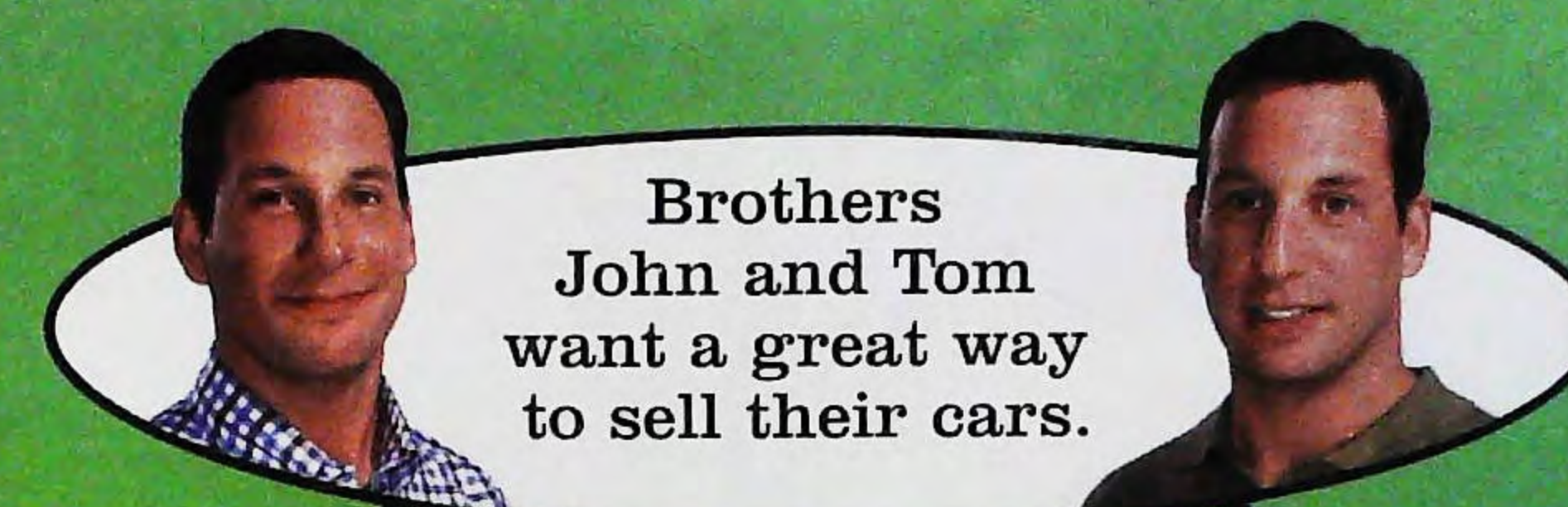
AS A CHILD, SPACEY CROONED BOBBY DARIN TUNES INTO A hairbrush in his family's living room. In 2000, he finally had the clout to buy the rights to the singer's life story, including his rocky marriage to teen queen Sandra Dee (Bosworth) and his struggle with an eventually fatal heart condition. One of Spacey's first hurdles: persuading Darin's former manager, Steve Blauner, and son, Dodd, to let him record his own versions of "Mack the Knife" and "Dream Lover" for the film. "The initial response from Blauner was 'Over my dead body is anybody but Bobby going to sing in this movie,'" Spacey recalls. "But when they began to realize that this was not some ego thing to sing in a movie, but that I wanted to honor him, they really got behind it."

To become the performer, Spacey (who at age 45 is eight years older than Darin lived to be) hired the makeup team from *The Lord*

of the Rings. "Yeah, but don't assume that I've got a different face on," says Spacey. "I've got about seven wigs that I wear through the course of the film, but it's not like I was in makeup for four hours trying to make myself look 22."

Spacey, who also served as producer and may end up with a writing credit as well, had trouble raising cash from Stateside studios. "I would very often hear 'It's a great story, but who's ever heard of Bobby Darin?' And my argument would be 'No one knew who Forrest Gump was.'" Eventually Spacey found European financing (the film was shot in Germany), but his initial investors backed out within weeks of the start date. "I just remember him calling me all the time going 'This is gonna happen, I will make this happen,'" says Bosworth. "Kevin has a way of instilling this incredible belief."

Spacey insists his cast and crew were stronger after the ordeal. "Nobody took other jobs, even when agents were saying 'This movie isn't happening, you should walk away from it,'" he says. "What I ended up feeling was that everybody took my dream and made it their own." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Since *American Beauty*, it's been five years of flops for Spacey. This labor of love needs to remind us how potent he can be. (Nov. 24)



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FALL MOVIE PREVIEW **NOVEMBER**

STARRING Nicolas Cage, Sean Bean, Justin Bartha, Diane Kruger
WRITTEN BY Credits not final
DIRECTED BY Jon Turteltaub

ENOUGH WITH THE OSCAR-BAITING DRAMATIC ROLES. Nicolas Cage is ready for some action. "I like to keep people guessing," says the actor of following *Adaptation* and *Matchstick Men* with the fast-paced *Treasure*. "I like to keep myself guessing. I can do smaller, more thought-provoking movies, and I can make an adventure film that I'm excited about." Reuniting with Überproducer Jerry Bruckheimer (together they've made *The Rock*, *Con Air*, and *Gone in 60 Seconds*) was pretty cool too. "Jerry has a good sense of my strengths," says Cage. "He knows what he wants...we trust each other."

Cage stars as Benjamin Franklin Gates, a historian whose family has been hunting an elusive treasure for generations. When he learns that America's Founding Fathers printed a map to the

hidden riches (created by the Knights Templar, an ancient secret society) on the back of the Declaration of Independence, Gates decides to steal the document. But only "in order to protect it," Cage notes. "Other people"—that would be bad guy Bean—"want it for selfish gain." Kruger, playing the hottest conservator the National Archives has ever seen, doesn't buy any of it.

And so ensues a cat-and-mouse race that takes Gates and a techie sidekick (Bartha) from Washington, D.C., to the Arctic. "Treasure hunts and grand adventures involving history always take place" outside the United States, says Turteltaub, who, it just so happens, went to high school with Cage. "I think we did a great job using American icons, landmarks, and vacation spots as mysterious historical locations."

As for the inevitable comparisons to the best-selling *Da Vinci Code*, Bruckheimer just shrugs. "The audience we'll be entertaining, chances are they didn't read it. And the ones who did will be attracted to this, so we win either way." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Not much now that Bruckheimer's left *King Arthur* behind and is back to what he does best: chase scenes and explosions. (Nov. 19)

National Treasure



Kruger hands it to Cage in *Treasure*

STARRING Liam Neeson, Laura Linney, Peter Sarsgaard, Chris O'Donnell, Timothy Hutton

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Bill Condon

THE RATINGS BOARD MUST HAVE HAD A FIELD DAY WITH this one. Neeson stars as Alfred Kinsey, the notorious academic who shocked an entire nation with his 1948 study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. "He was half scientist, half preacher," says Condon, the screenwriter of *Chicago* and writer-director of *Gods and Monsters*. "It was just fascinating trying to figure out what kind of guy could pull this off. What kind of guy in the 1940s could travel around the country and get people to talk so honestly about this incredibly intimate part of their lives?"

In today's post-Janet Jackson climate, Kinsey's story suddenly doesn't seem so dated. Says Sarsgaard, who plays Kinsey's bisexual assistant Clyde Martin: "Think about the biggest scandal in American politics in the last 20 years. Was it Iran-contra? No.

Was it weapons of mass destruction? No. It's a bl-- job in the 'Oral Office.'" Given its subject matter, *Kinsey* includes graphic images of genitalia, both in the flesh (Sarsgaard's, to be exact) and in scientific photos. Still, says Sarsgaard, "this is the least sexual movie about sex ever. The way it's talked about is entirely clinical the whole time."

For Linney, who appears as Kinsey's wife, Clara, it offered a chance to reunite with Neeson, who also played her spouse on Broadway in *The Crucible*. "I've never done a play with someone and then done a movie," she says. "The difference that gives you is tremendous. Most people would have to make this movie twice to get to the point where we were at the very beginning."

Despite the placid set, the crew is bracing for conservative reaction to the touchy content. "People just flip out. They feel like the fabric of American society is coming undone," marvels Linney. "People have been having sex since the beginning of time, and hopefully they'll keep doing it." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** It's *A Beautiful Mind* for the kinky set! But strong reviews will be imperative to bring in crowds beyond the curiosity seekers. (Nov. 12)

Linney and Neeson do "research"

Kinsey



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DECEMBER

FALL MOVIE PREVIEW

STARRING Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Kate Beckinsale, Gwen Stefani, Adam Scott

WRITTEN BY John Logan

DIRECTED BY Martin Scorsese



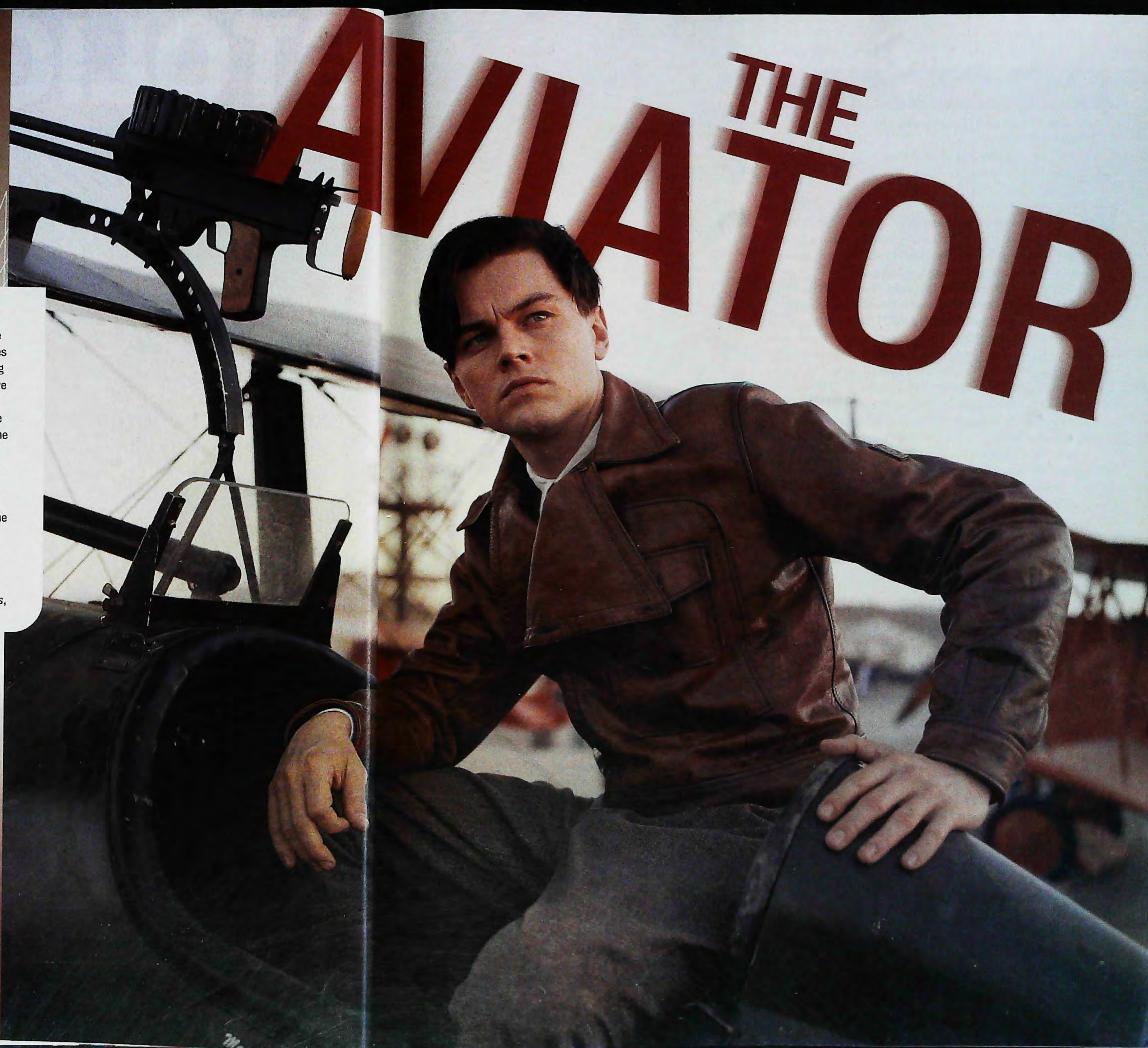
Before he was famous for being a reclusive germaphobe—or, in Logan's words, "the old man in Las Vegas with long fingernails and shoe boxes on his feet watching *Ice Station Zebra* as his Mormon aides put codeine in his arms"—Howard Hughes was famous for being a few other things: movie mogul, Hollywood lady-killer, and above all, pioneering aviator. Scorsese's reported \$100 million epic, starring DiCaprio as the eccentric entrepreneur, focuses on the 20-year period when America's first billionaire revolutionized the business of air travel. "The film presents a Howard Hughes not really known," says Scorsese, who was recruited to the project by his *Gangs of New York* star DiCaprio. The actor developed the film with Logan and helmer Michael Mann, but the latter begged off due to biopic burnout after *The Insider* and *Ali*. Scorsese came aboard despite a fear of flying. "But the more anything upsets me," he says, "the more I want to learn about it."

The Aviator does deal with the Hollywood Hughes, too. Scorsese, noted for his encyclopedic knowledge of movies, says he got some cineast kicks out of restaging scenes from *Hell's Angels*, one of the two films Hughes is credited with directing. The film

also chronicles romances with Katharine Hepburn (Blanchett), who the film argues was the love of his life, and Ava Gardner (Beckinsale), with whom, the film suggests, Hughes was sexually obsessed. "He was attracted to large-breasted women, and she had the biggest pair around," says Beckinsale. Meanwhile, Logan and Scorsese both say they went to great lengths to present sensitively and seriously the mental illness that would ultimately define Hughes' image—his terror-stricken interface with the world. "Like washing his hands. How he deals with a doorknob. How his people bring him lunch," says Scorsese. "The details entrench him in a kind of madness that he can't move out of."

Since wrapping last November, Scorsese has been working to whittle the film to about two hours and 40 minutes. Miramax and Warner Bros. will jointly distribute *The Aviator*, and producer Graham King says all is well between Scorsese and Miramax's Harvey Weinstein, who publicly clashed over the running time of *Gangs*. "The difference is night and day," says King, who adds that no one in the *Aviator* camp dares utter the O-word. "But wouldn't it be great if this could be the one for Marty?" **WHAT'S AT STAKE** That elusive O—as in Oscar, which Scorsese has never won. (Dec. 17)

THE AVIATOR



The Woodsman

STARRING Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick, Mos Def, Eve, David Alan Grier

WRITTEN BY Steven Fetcher, Nicole Kassell

DIRECTED BY Nicole Kassell

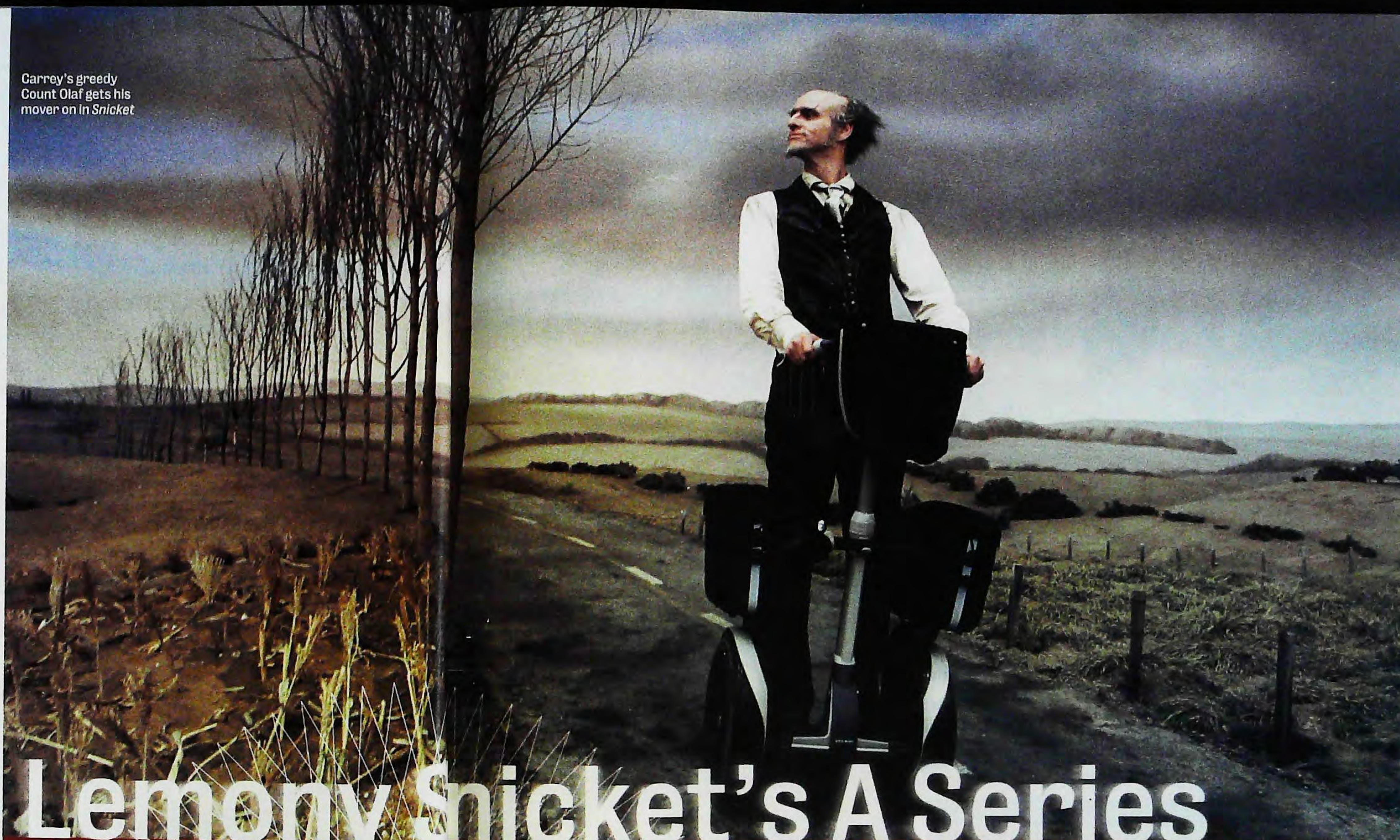
WHEN *THE WOODSMAN* DEBUTED AT SUNDANCE, IT WAS deemed too hot for any distributor to handle. But the story of a convicted pedophile returning to society after a 12-year jail sentence was picked up by Newmarket (which also distributed *The Passion of the Christ*) for a reported \$1.5 million.

Bacon admits the material gave him pause. "I was haunted by the script, so I let [real-life wife] Kyra read it," recalls the actor. "Just, you know, 'Am I crazy, or [is this] really good?' I found the character's struggle to get well compelling." He was also impressed with first-time director Kassell and Fetcher's deft handling of the topic. (The screenplay was adapted from Fetcher's 2000 Off Broadway play.) "It's not a cut-and-dry morality tale," says Bacon, "and that's what independent films should do: challenge the emotions we feel in mainstream movies." Sedgwick worried that playing her husband's love interest would be distracting, but she found the character of Vicki, a lumberyard worker, too rich to pass up. "It's a beautiful story about redemption," she explains. The characters "are both so damaged you don't even know if they should be together. In their quest for help, these unhealthy people find each other." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Newmarket's streak. After *Monster* and *The Passion*, the indie distributor has proven it can translate controversy into box office. (Dec. 24)



Sedgwick and Bacon are lovers in arms

Carrey's greedy Count Olaf gets his mover on in *Snicket*



Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events

IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO GET A REAL HATE ON FOR THOSE KIDS," says Carrey of his pint-size costars. "Especially the little ones. The monkeys. The monkeys were out of control, I swear to God. If you're not giving 'em an M&M or somethin' they're impossible."

Nevertheless, rug rats are an unavoidable work hazard when you sign on to play the villain in an adaptation of a beloved children's-book series. And Daniel Handler's darkly comic *Snicket* novellas follow not one, or two, but *three* knee biters: miserable orphans Violet, Klaus, and baby Sunny, who fall in and out of the care of inept guardians (like Streep's ultraphobic Aunt Josephine) and dodge Carrey's hawk-nosed Count Olaf. "We ended up shooting seven months straight," says a weary-sounding Silberling (*Moonlight Mile*) of his \$100 million-plus movie. "For the younger actors

STARRING Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep, Billy Connolly, Emily Browning, Liam Aiken

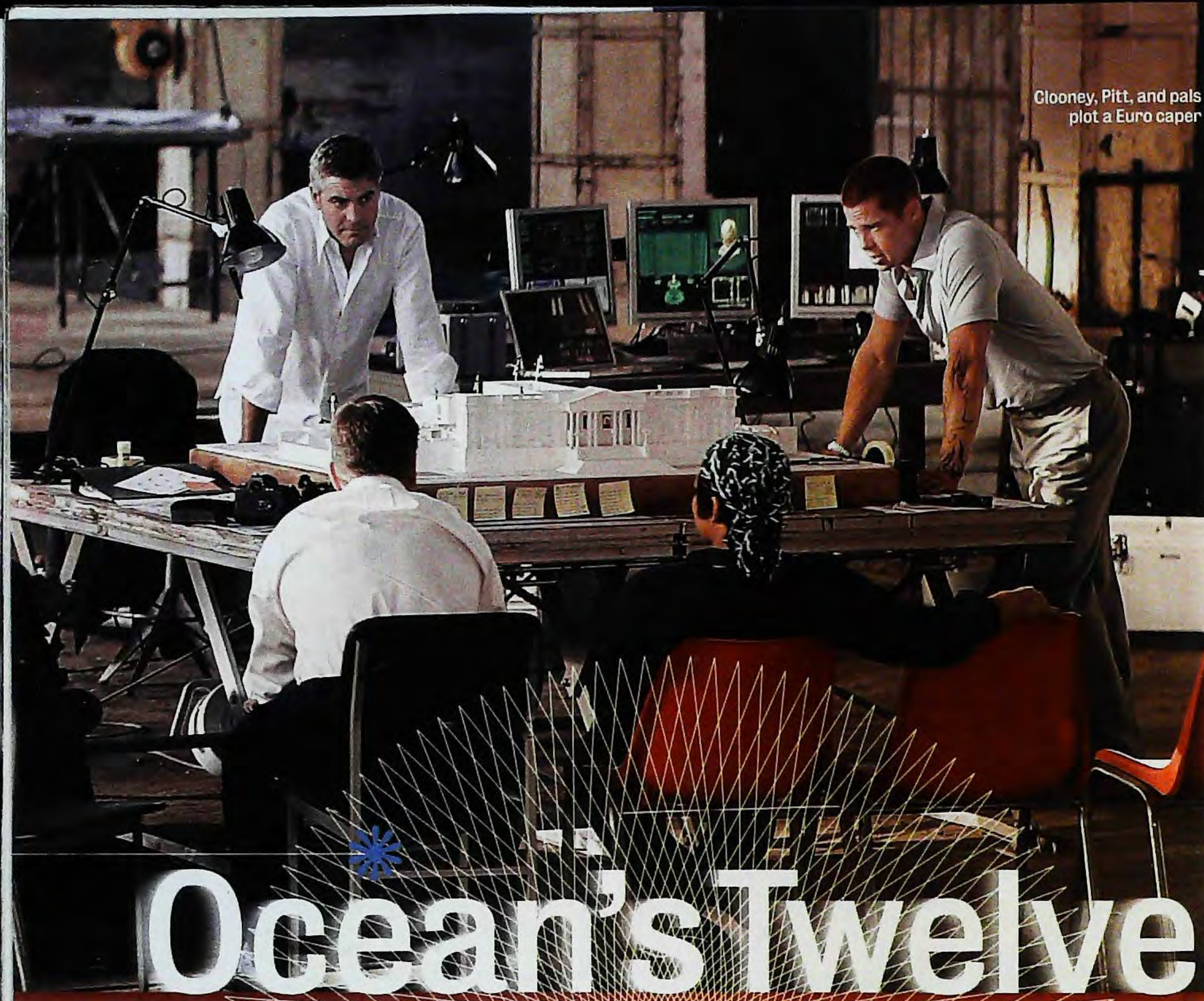
WRITTEN BY Robert Gordon

DIRECTED BY Brad Silberling

that's a lifetime. The last night of shooting I said to [the kids], 'Labor law requires we wrap you by 10, but there's nothing saying you can't stay afterwards,' so they pulled an all-nighter with the crew."

The script, written by *Men in Black II*'s Gordon after an initial draft by Handler, telescopes the first three books in the series. Given the hilarious neo-gothic tone of the source material, the result

could well fall in the great, spooky-goofy tradition of the *Addams Family* movies. The wild card is that no one really knows how deep an affection kids have for Handler's books, which are wildly popular but haven't whipped up the frenzy of *Harry Potter* or the critical acclaim of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy. "It doesn't matter. I love these books," says Carrey. "They have this *don't go in that closet* [vibe]. There's this great balance going on, because the narration gets very hopeful, but ultimately negative things happen. In comparison, audiences' lives will seem quite bright." So it's an *uplifting* story about the misery of three small children? "Exactly. You walk out of the theater going 'Whew! I'm glad I'm not them!'" **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Everyone is looking for the next *Harry Potter*. Paramount hopes they've found it in *Snicket*. (Dec. 17)



Clooney, Pitt, and pals plot a Euro caper

Ocean's Twelve

STARRING: George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Matt Damon, Catherine Zeta-Jones

WRITTEN BY George Nolfi
DIRECTED BY Steven Soderbergh

DESPITE THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE SHOOTING *Ocean's Eleven*, Soderbergh wasn't thinking sequel. That is, until he touched down in Rome as part of the film's international press tour. "We literally went from interviews in London saying, 'There's no way there'll be a second movie,' to landing in Italy and Steven saying, 'There's another one, and we're going to shoot it here,'" says Damon. "It was his first time in Italy; maybe he was touched by all the masters."

Rather than start from scratch, execs at Warner Bros. went to their shelves and grabbed a script by Nolfi (*Timeline*) called *Honor Among Thieves*. "It was about an American thief and a European thief going head-to-head," says Damon. "They kept the European thief very similar and divided the American up 11 ways."

Here's how the new story goes: A European crook (*Irreversible's*

Vincent Cassel) helps casino boss Benedict (Andy Garcia)—who's been trying to get back his \$160 million—finally track down Clooney and Co. To pay back the loot, which most of them have blown, the group takes Cassel's character up on a bet. "He's trying to prove that he's the greatest thief in the world," Damon explains. "So he challenges us to steal something. His rationale is, Once you try to steal it and fail, they'll increase the security, and then I'll steal it." (Zeta-Jones, meanwhile, joins the cast as Pitt's ex-girlfriend.)

The film's multiple-heist, globe-trotting plotline meant that the cast gallivanted from Amsterdam to Rome to other European locales, attracting fans and photographers wherever they went. "My girlfriend [actress Summer Phoenix] and I drove from Amsterdam to Lake Como," says costar and brand-new dad Casey Affleck. "Paparazzi followed us all the way into Germany, trying to get a picture of the baby. Finally we pulled over for gas and I said to them, 'Guys, you don't want a picture of us. Go follow Julia around!'"

So about that title: Exactly who completes the dirty dozen? Teases Damon. "The 12th person in the crew is revealed throughout the course of the movie." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** There's always a risk with a...oh, forget it, how soon can we get a ticket? (Dec. 10)

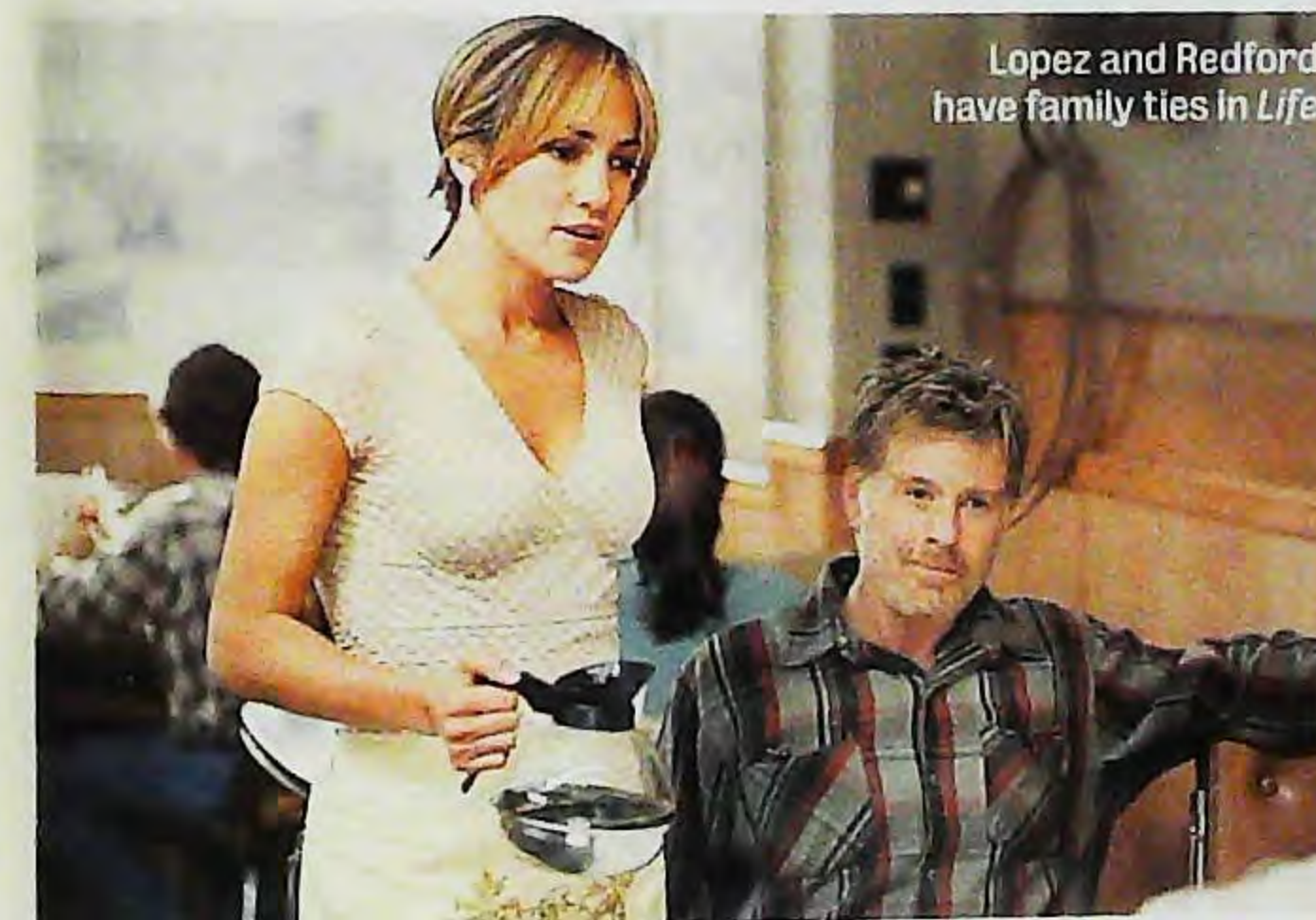
An Unfinished Life

STARRING Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez, Morgan Freeman, Josh Lucas, Becca Gardner

WRITTEN BY Mark Spragg, Virginia Korus Spragg

DIRECTED BY Lasse Hallström

AN UPLIFTING MELODRAMA, SHOT IN AN EXOTIC LOCALE, just in time for Oscar season? Yep, it's Hallström, director of *Chocolat* and *The Shipping News*—although the gentle helmer waves away any suggestion of a movie formula. "I would really prefer to shoot in New York, because that's where I live," chuckles the Swedish transplant. Nevertheless, the American West, not New York, is the backdrop of *Life*, which tells the story of a rancher (Redford) who must come to terms with his son's death after his troubled daughter-in-law (Lopez) arrives with a little girl who happens to be his grandchild (Gardner). Hallström actually shot his reported \$30 million film in northern Canada, just as Lopez's personal life was imploding last year. "She seemed absolutely cool about [her] ongoing debacles," the director reports. "There must have been some pressure, but I think we all enjoyed the hiding spot we had in Canada." Hallström promises a "slightly different Redford" than audiences are accustomed to. "I shouldn't say more," he says. "That will be my teaser." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Talk about unfinished lives: The legendary Redford has never won an acting Oscar. (Dec. 24)

Lopez and Redford have family ties in *Life*

Fierce People

STARRING Diane Lane, Donald Sutherland, Anton Yelchin, Chris Evans, Kristen Stewart

WRITTEN BY Dirk Wittenborn

DIRECTED BY Griffin Dunne

IN *PEOPLE*, LANE'S IRRESPONSIBLE, HARD-PARTYING MOM tries to fix her life by taking her unwilling son (*Taken's* Yelchin) to live with a wealthy benefactor (Sutherland). The role reunited the actress with a term she's always hated: sugar daddy. "My son [in the movie] perceives it as, 'Oh, she's shitting this guy,'" she says. "He just assumes. It's so enraging as a woman. I went through it as an

actress. People thought I was having a thing with [Francis Ford] Coppola. Oh yeah, *that's* why he hired me...for *three* movies!"

The '70s-set film, which eventually takes a dark turn, is based on Wittenborn's 2002 novel that Dunne, an old friend, optioned before it was finished. "He asked for my help on finding an ending," says Dunne. "I said, 'I don't have any ideas, but I'll option it right now on the chance you'll find one.'" The director had Wittenborn expand Lane's character, then set about creating a rich man's world on a poor man's budget. "It was challenging, but it looks fantastic," says Dunne. "We have balloon races and show cars. It's got a *Great Gatsby* feel to it." How in the name of Richard Branson do you do a balloon race with no money? Quips Dunne, "Never again is how you do it." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Lane's proven she's brilliant playing wayward mothers. Let's hope this is not one manic mom too many. (Dec. 24)



Reynolds the vampire slayer

Blade: Trinity

STARRING Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Ryan Reynolds, Jessica Biel, Triple H

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY David S. Goyer

WILL FRODO MAKE IT TO MOUNT DOOM? IS GANDALF...OH, wait, wrong trilogy from New Line. For the third and presumably final installment of *Blade*, screenwriter Goyer, who also penned *Blade* and *Blade II* (which earned a combined \$152 million), steps behind the camera to complete what he hopes could be "the *Star Wars* of vampire films," he says, "a whole Wagnerian epic."

In *Trinity*, Snipes returns as the half-vampire, half-mortal Blade, and Kristofferson is back as his mentor, Whistler. To stop the vampire kingdom from taking over the world, they team with the Nightstalkers, a group of human vampire hunters led by Whistler's illegitimate daughter (Biel) and the ruffian Hannibal King (Reynolds).

So what's new? This one's funny. "It's not *Airplane!* or anything like that," says Goyer of the roughly \$60 million production. "It vacillates between being really funny, but then in the course of a single scene, it gets dark and serious." Also serious was Reynolds, who packed on 20 pounds of vampire-slaying muscle, thanks to a personal trainer. Says Reynolds: They "just kicked my a-- into fine cottage cheese pudding for about six months." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Are fans willing to bite a third time around? (Dec. 10)

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FALL MOVIE PREVIEW ◀ DECEMBER



Streisand's sex
therapist rubs De
Niro the wrong way

Meet the Fockers

STARRING Ben Stiller, Robert De Niro, Barbra Streisand,
Dustin Hoffman, Blythe Danner, Teri Polo

WRITTEN BY Jim Herzfeld, John Hamburg, Vince DiMeglio,
Tim Rasmussen

DIRECTED BY Jay Roach

SHORTLY AFTER *MEET THE PARENTS* OPENED HUGE IN October 2000, Universal and DreamWorks reportedly forked over \$1.1 million to its initial writer, Herzfeld, for a sequel script. *Parents* went on to rack up \$330 million worldwide. But development on *Fockers*, which would follow engaged-to-be-married male nurse Greg Focker (Stiller) as he introduces his uptight future in-laws (De Niro and Danner) to his own folks, kept spinning on. "There were a lot of great ideas," says producer Jane Rosenthal. "But we didn't have a clear idea where the story was going." It went through multiple rewrites, including passes by Paul and Chris Weitz (*About a Boy*), David O. Russell (*Flirting With Disaster*), and Larry Stuckey with director Roach (ringleader of the *Austin Powers* flicks). Ultimately, *Parents* cowriter Hamburg returned to do what he did

before—pull together earlier drafts and stay on-set for revisions throughout filming, which only wrapped in August. The final scenario: The Byrnes and Focker clans face off at so-called "Focker Isle," the Florida-peninsula home of Bernie (Hoffman) and Roz (Streisand). He's a left-leaning former lawyer, she's a sex therapist whose clients are mostly seniors—and both of them drive uptight Mr. Byrnes (De Niro) crazy. Hoffman has played opposite De Niro for laughs before in *Wag the Dog*. But what made their first-time collaborator Streisand choose *Fockers* as a comedic comeback after eight years out of the movie game? Says Hoffman, "I had heard that Barbra was almost persuaded not to do it by her friends because she wasn't the star." Back in mid-March, director Roach told EW he thought Streisand was "not likely" to say yes—but holy Linda Richman, she did, after assiduous courting by Stiller and Universal executives. For Hoffman, playing Streisand's hubby was both a virgin work experience and a personal reunion. "I met Barbra in 1959 or 1960 when we were studying at the same theater studio in New York," he recalls. "She was just 17 and I was going with her roommate. All I remember is that everybody kept saying not only was she a good actress, she was also a very good singer." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Part 3. Anyone for Greg becoming a dad in, say, *Meet the Little Fockers*? (Dec. 22)

The Phantom of the Opera

Butler and
Rossum's night
at the Opera

STARRING Gerard Butler, Emmy Rossum, Patrick Wilson, Miranda Richardson, Minnie Driver

WRITTEN BY Andrew Lloyd Webber, Joel Schumacher

DIRECTED BY Joel Schumacher

"I'M NOT A SINGER," SAYS THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. "I SANG in a band when I was a lawyer. Most of it was screaming and shouting." Fans of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Goth-lite megamusical—and there are quite a few, given the show's 16-year run on Broadway—probably recall precious little headbanging. But Butler, the Scottish actor tapped to play the mad, half-masked Casanova in the long-awaited screen version, isn't worried. After all, he had four whole lessons before he had to audition in front of Lloyd Webber with "Music of the Night."

He must have done something right. The 34-year-old, last seen (by a select few) in *Timeline*, landed the part. With Butler on board (along with *Mystic River* breakout Rossum as opera ingenue Chris-

tine and *Angels in America*'s Wilson as the Phantom's rival, Raoul), a project planned since 1988 finally started its long crawl into the light. "Andrew Lloyd Webber saw *The Lost Boys* in '87 and wanted to meet me," recalls Schumacher (*Phone Booth*). "We were going to make the movie at that time with Michael Crawford and Sarah Brightman. [And then] Sarah and Andrew chose to separate amicably, and everything got tied up in settlements. Then my career took off and I was really busy."

In the meantime, the project got passed around, with many potential Phantoms rumored (most notably Antonio Banderas). But Lloyd Webber never forgot about Schumacher, and Schumacher never forgot about *Phantom*. Sir Andrew must have been pretty delighted with the results: He was inspired to write one new song. (Stand down, purists: It'll go over the end credits.) "It's so shamelessly romantic that you won't think I made it," reports Schumacher, "because I'm so corrupt and cynical." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** *Phantom* has been seen on stage by multiple millions—something that definitely helped *Chicago*, which didn't even have a chandelier. But will its ripe pop romanticism connect on film? (Dec. 25)

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STARRING Adam Sandler, Téa Leoni, Paz Vega, Cloris Leachman

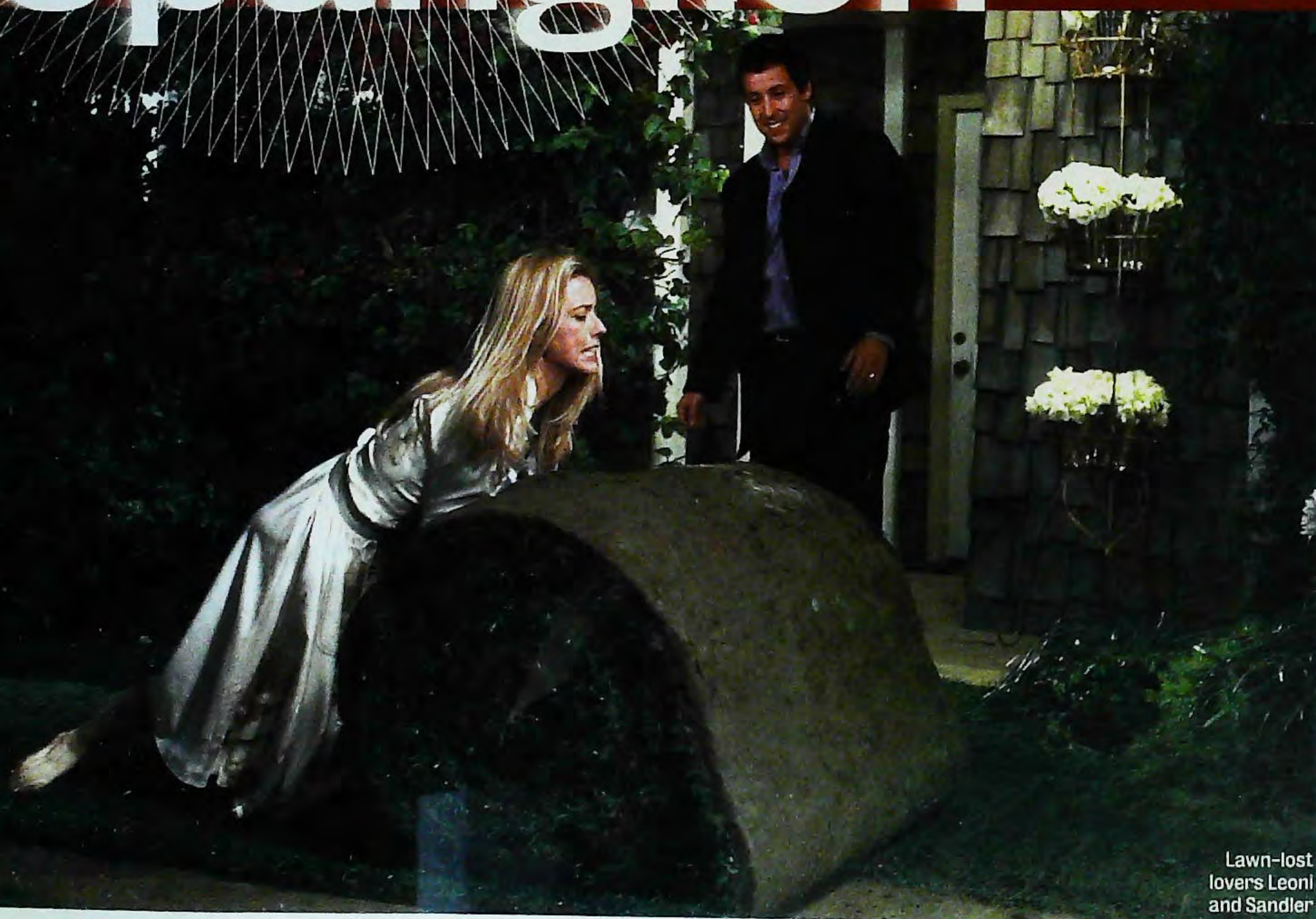
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY James L. Brooks

WHEN BROOKS MAKES A MOVIE—WHICH ISN'T OFTEN—Oscar balloters tend to pay attention. His 1983 feature debut, *Terms of Endearment*, won five golden guys; 1997's *As Good as It Gets* nabbed two. So what's the handicapping like for *Spanglish*? Right now, the self-doubting filmmaker sounds like he's got no idea. He wrapped shooting in May, and asked to sum up the movie, he says, "If I could do that, we would have had a trailer out already. I think I've never juggled so many characters." Sandler plays John Clasky, a successful chef who becomes unhappily super-successful when his restaurant lands a four-star rating (a plotline Brooks helped authenticate by hanging out with celeb cook Thomas Keller). Meantime, the highly neurotic Mrs. Clasky (Leoni) hires a beautiful, single-mom

Latina housekeeper named Flor (Vega, a Spanish film star making her English-language debut). Sparks fly between the husband and the help, and a cataclysmic domestic devolution begins. Says Brooks: "I think at its core, it's a romantic comedy. It has romance in it, and we're trying to be funny. At a certain point, you don't know how it's going to end. You can't figure out how it possibly *could* end. And that's because *I* didn't know, but I just kept on pursuing it."

Brooks initially hired Anne Bancroft to play Leoni's mother, a sharp-tongued alcoholic who used to be a jazz singer. But four weeks into shooting, Bancroft had to undergo minor surgery for an undisclosed problem. She couldn't return to work in a timely fashion, so Leachman—an old Brooks pal from his days running *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*—stepped in as a replacement (and in doing so, says Brooks, she asked, "Why didn't you just hire me in the first place?"). Says Leoni: "The whole dynamic was changed. I had to figure out who I was all over again." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Sandler's chance to build on the prestige-project cred he first aimed for with *Punch-Drunk Love*. (Dec. 17)

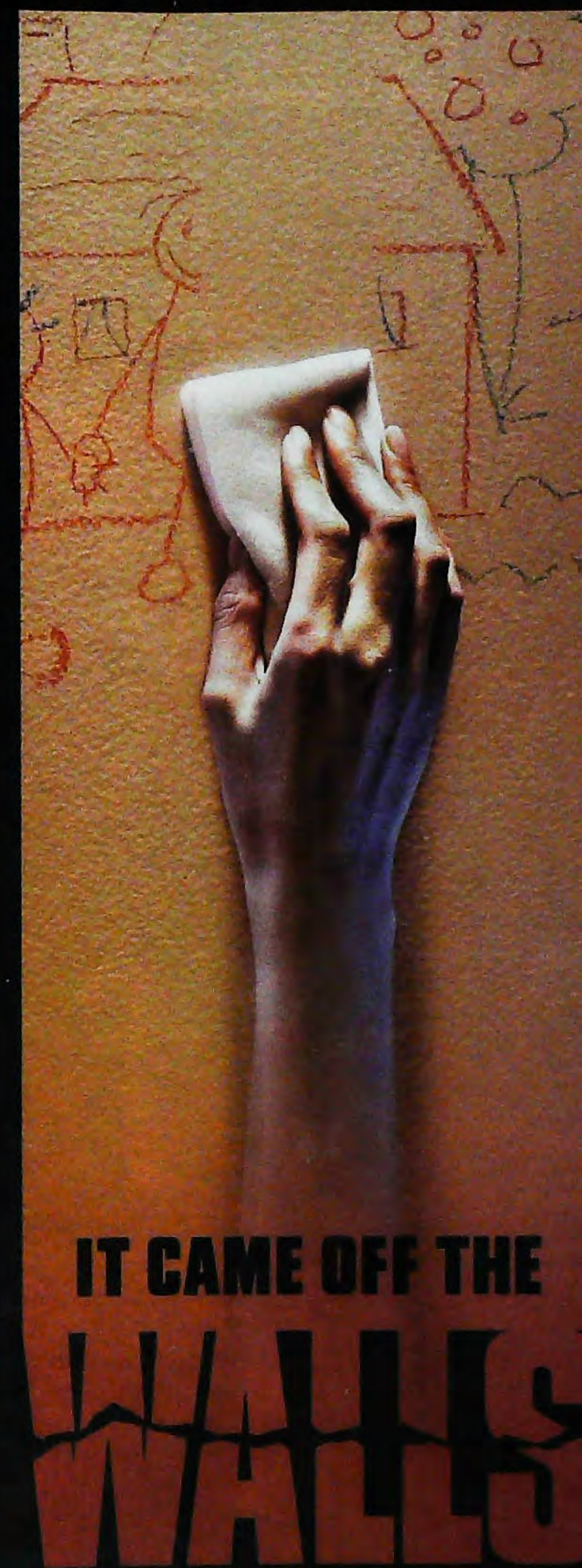
Spanglish



Lawn-lost lovers Leoni and Sandler



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Paltrow and Gyllenhaal do it by the numbers

Proof

STARRING Gwyneth Paltrow, Anthony Hopkins, Jake Gyllenhaal, Hope Davis

WRITTEN BY David Auburn, Rebecca Miller

DIRECTED BY John Madden

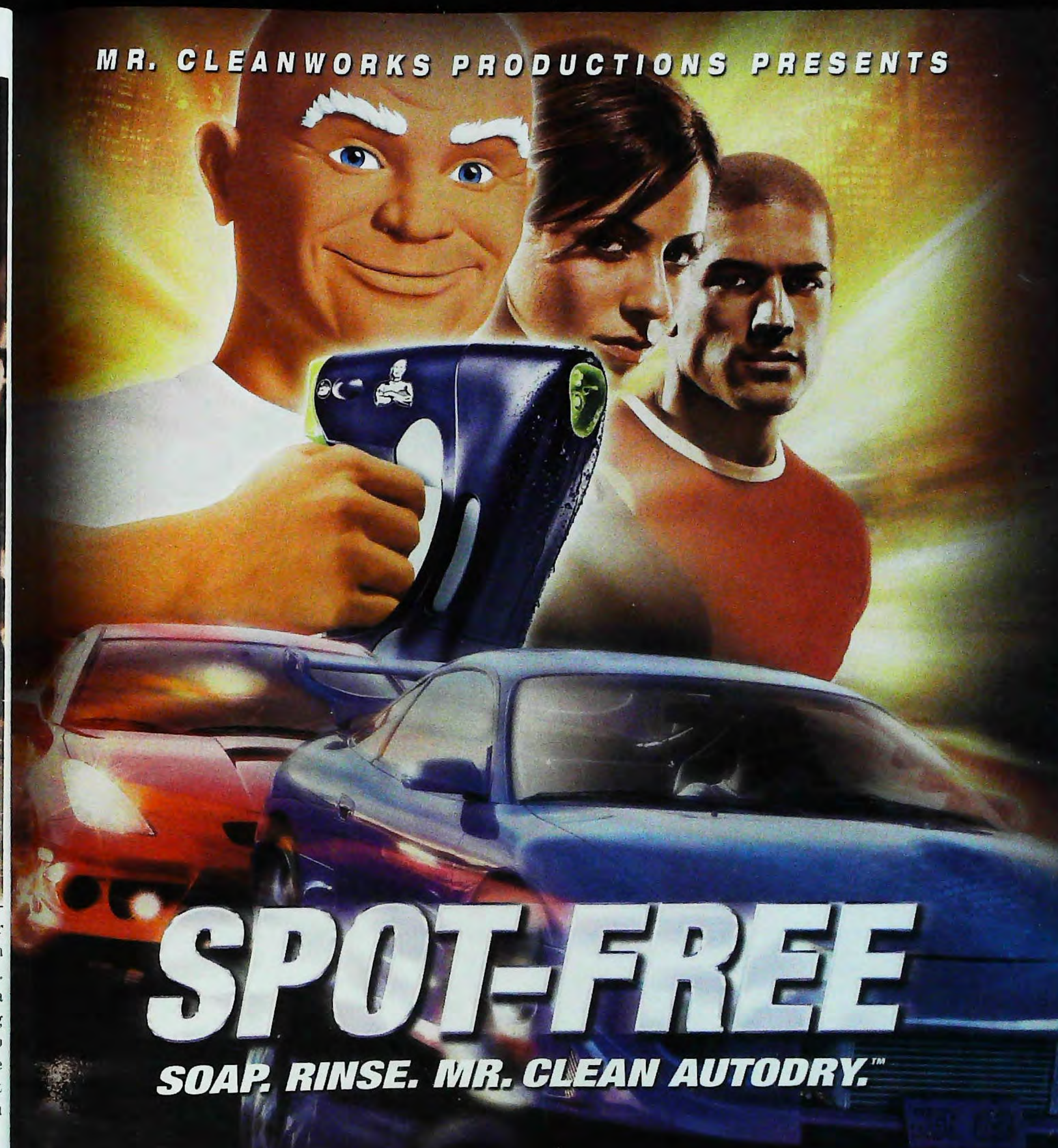
IT'S ABOUT A GIRL IN BEREAVEMENT WHO CANNOT MOVE FORWARD because she is paralyzed by fear and uncertainty," says director Madden. The girl in this case is Paltrow—whose last pairing with Madden, *Shakespeare in Love*, brought her an Oscar—and she's mourning the death of her mathematician father (played by Hopkins). "Light stuff!" jokes the actress.

The rich story, suffused with pockets of real light and humor, was a hit on Broadway, earning playwright David Auburn a 2001 Pulitzer Prize. When Madden and Paltrow launched the play in London's West End, she won raves for her portrayal of the devastated daughter. "She's not a star for nothing," says Madden. "Gwyneth has the ability to convey fragility and vulnerability, particularly at that melancholy end of the range." To further ease the transfer to

the big screen, Madden enlisted Gyllenhaal to play Paltrow's math-geek suitor and Davis her pinched sister, Claire, who swoops in for the funeral, intent on restoring order. "Doing these scenes with her," raves Paltrow, "it was like going to an amusement park. Edge-of-your-seat and fun." Davis agrees: "It just seemed like a perfect fit when we started working together. The scenes are long in a play-like way, and we got to do something you don't get to do that often in film, which is to really run with it." The actresses were "a marvelous physical match," adds Madden. "There's a moment at the end of the movie when they're on an escalator together and you can sort of see the umbilical cord between them."

Hopkins, as the academic genius betrayed by his mental illness, looms large over the grieving brood. Madden points to the Oscar winner's most memorable roles—Lear, Titus, and Hannibal Lecter—to explain his casting. "I think that the towering rage, the sense of self-belief now brought low, is all part of that character," says the director. "I always felt that any actor undertaking this role had to have played Lear." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** With the much more expensive *Aviator* also opening in December, will *Proof* get the TLC that it needs from Miramax? (Dec. 24)

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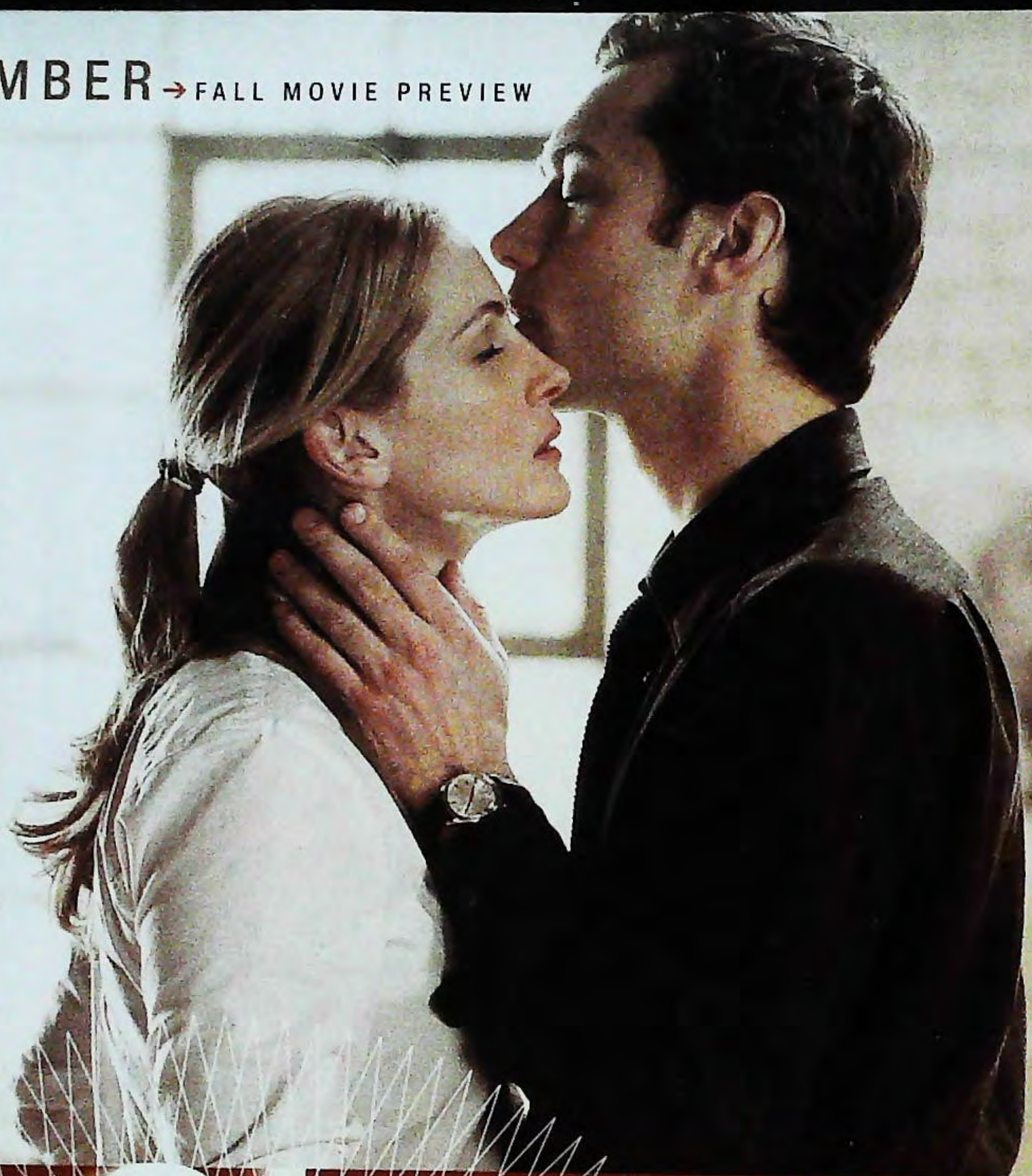
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Roberts and Law have a *Closer* encounter

Closer

STARRING Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman, Clive Owen

WRITTEN BY Patrick Marber

DIRECTED BY Mike Nichols

A TALE OF TORMENTED LOVE. LAW STARS AS DAN, A TORTURED writer who betrays his girlfriend Alice (Portman) with Anna (Roberts), who will soon become the girlfriend of Larry, played by Owen. Based on Marber's stage play of the same name (in which Owen played the role of Dan), *Closer* is "unusual in that it has huge time jumps," says Nichols, whose last stage-to-screen adaptation, HBO's *Angels in America*, recently racked up 21 Emmy nominations. "It's all beautiful beginnings and miserable endings, somewhat like the way you experience your own adventures in love as you look back." While all four cast members said yes to Nichols immediately—"If he asked me to pick up his dog's poop for a year, I would do it," says Portman—there was some concern about the darkness of the material. "On the surface,

it was a piece that really depressed me," says Roberts, who inherited the role from Cate Blanchett after Blanchett became pregnant. "It's about deception and confusion, and I thought, 'People just don't act like this.' But you get in there, and it [becomes] something that you make very human, so it's not just these grand, horrible, bad things that people do. It's more painful than that."

Embracing the spirit of the stage version, the cast gathered in New York for two weeks of rehearsal before heading off to London to begin filming. "We spent hours and hours talking," says Portman. "I remember Julia saying it was like school." Complete with reading material: Roberts and Nichols both handed out favorite books, with Nichols contributing Alessandro Baricco's *Silk* and Roberts suggesting Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*. "They were tales of passionate love, because [the movie] is all about that," Portman continues. "There's this nastiness [to the film], but the deepest part is the passion when people feel they have no choice." **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Sony is looking for a Best Picture contender—something the studio hasn't had in at least four years (remember *Erin Brockovich*?). (Dec. 3)

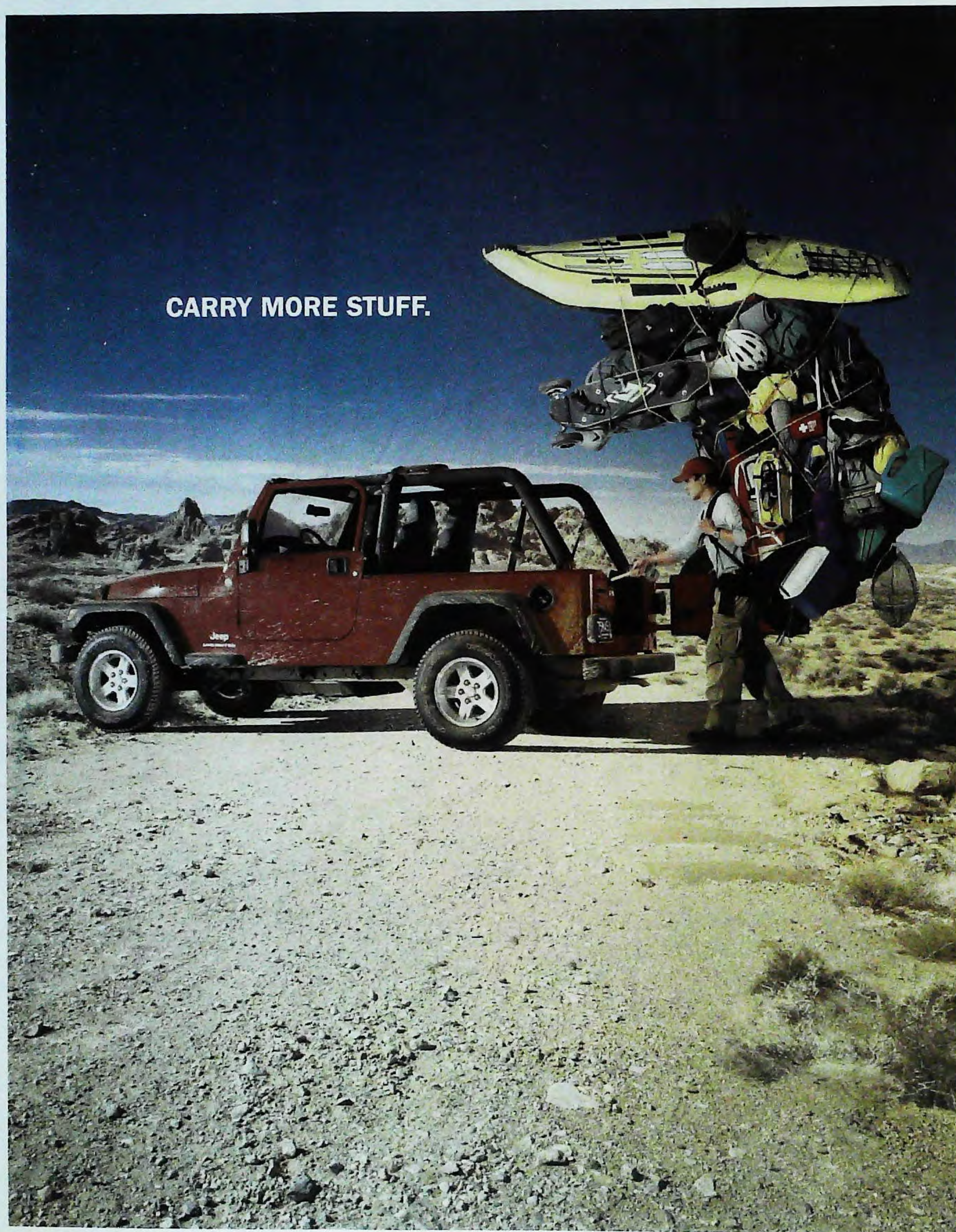
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CARRY MORE STUFF.



STARRING Dennis Quaid, Topher Grace, Scarlett Johansson, Marg Helgenberger, Selma Blair

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY Paul Weitz

WHAT WAS THE PARTIAL INSPIRATION FOR WEITZ'S OFFICE-politics tale about a middle-aged middle manager (Quaid) whose new 26-year-old boss (*That '70s Show*'s Grace) begins dating his teenage daughter (Johansson)? A 1995 sociological tract called *Jihad vs. McWorld*. "The premise was that there are forces that threaten open society," says Weitz. "One of them was ethnic factionalization, and the other one was the idea that capitalism equals democracy."

Did we mention this is a comedy?

Despite its academic ancestry, *Synergy* aims for the same droll humor as Weitz's Oscar-nominated *About a Boy* (which he codirected with brother Chris). For Quaid's Dan Foreman, the comedy springs from pain. "He's just trying to maintain an even strain and

FALL MOVIE PREVIEW ◀ DECEMBER

swallow what's been handed to him," says the actor. "Topher has my job, he's in my office, and now he's with my daughter. It's just too much for a man to take."

Weitz took care to make sure the audience's allegiance won't be too firmly planted in one camp. "I hope your heart goes out to both of them," he says. Confirms Grace: "It's not like *Changing Lanes*, where you feel like this guy's the good guy and then there's the other guy. You feel for both of these guys."

Grace—who's been earning small parts in big films like *Mona Lisa Smile* and *Ocean's Eleven*—read four times for the role and convinced Weitz that his upbringing perfectly complemented the film's corporate setting. "I'm from Connecticut, my father's a businessman," he says. "I said to Paul, 'My second language is how to talk to people in California. My first language is the way the script is written.'" Once cast, he found himself appearing opposite two award-winning costars. "It's a huge break for me," Grace says. "The first day of rehearsal, it was me, Scarlett, and Dennis. We were all standing in front of Paul's office, and I go, 'One of these things is not like the other...'" **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Grace's shot to prove he's got big-screen chops. (Dec. 29)

Synergy



Quaid shares quality time with Johansson



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Murray (center) and team embark on a sea quest

The Life Aquatic

STARRING Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett, Anjelica Huston, Willem Dafoe, Jeff Goldblum

WRITTEN BY Wes Anderson, Noah Baumbach

DIRECTED BY Wes Anderson

ANDERSON, DIRECTOR OF THE GEEK-CHIC COMEDIES *Bottle Rocket*, *Rushmore*, and *The Royal Tenenbaums*, has never had an easy time boiling his movies down to a quick, simple pitch: "What I do is sort of the opposite of that," he deadpans. "Unboiling." When it comes to his latest film, he's more adrift than ever. Basically, it's the story of a Jacques Cousteau-esque oceanographer/filmmaker named Steve Zissou (Murray, in his tragicomic wheelhouse), who is struggling to finish his latest underwater-exploration documentary. Along for the ride are Wilson, playing a pilot for Air Kentucky; Blanchett, as a reporter working on a profile of Zissou; Huston, as Zissou's dissatisfied wife;

Goldblum, as his pompous rival; and Dafoe, as his loyal German crewmate, Klaus. So, yeah—it's *that* kind of movie.

Shot mainly in Italy with a large international cast, *Aquatic* is by far Anderson's most complicated project to date. Among the many logistical challenges, he had to retrofit a World War II warship into Zissou's research vessel, the *Belafonte*, and, with the help of animator Henry Selick (*Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*), create an entire world of not-quite-real sea creatures, like the jaguar shark and the sugar crab. And, of course, he had to shoot on the ocean, which for a guy whose films have all been fairly small-scale, landlocked affairs was "completely chaotic and wild."

Dafoe says the adventure of making the film ultimately helped to feed the story. "The first day, we had rough seas and I'd say about 99 percent of the people got really ill," he says. "But it's a bonding experience, you know, to be puking with your costars over the side of a boat." We'll take his word for it. **WHAT'S AT STAKE** Murray-philes think the actor's due for an Oscar, but a quirky comedy may line him up more for a Golden Globe than a golden boy. (Dec. 10)

—Mr. Wendy

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Coming Soon



A month-to-month look at 80 additional fall releases



Cellular

A thriller featuring *The Perfect Score*'s Chris Evans as a young man who receives a cell-phone call from a frantic stranger (Kim Basinger) claiming she's been kidnapped but doesn't know her whereabouts. Adding to the suspense, Evans' phone battery is dying! And detective William H. Macy has a mustache! Egad! (Sept. 10)

September

The Cookout

Fish don't fry in the kitchen when a recently moneyed NBA draftee gets his rowdy family together for a backyard feast to the dismay of his new neighborhood. Rapper Storm P plays the B-baller finally getting a piece of the pie, while security guard Queen Latifah makes sure those beans don't burn on the grill. (Sept. 3)

Criminal

As a pompous hustler scammin' his siblings out of their inheritance, John C. Reilly recruits *Y Tu Mama*

También's Diego Luna into his world of tricks in a remake of Argentina's *Nine Queens*. The George Clooney–Steven Soderbergh-produced flick costars Maggie Gyllenhaal as the duped sister. (Sept. 10)

A Dirty Shame

John Waters' NC-17-rated fornication farce stars Tracey Ullman as a woman whose post-concussion syndrome requires healing of the sexual variety. Chris Isaak is there to provide that lovin' feeling. Also stars Johnny Knoxville. (Sept. 24)

Enduring Love

Samantha Morton and Daniel Craig lament a fatal hot-air-balloon

accident before duking it out with fellow mourner/psycho Rhys Ifans, as adapted from Ian McEwan's peculiar stalker story. Think *The Talented Mr. Ripley* with Philip Seymour Hoffman replaced by a hot-air balloon. (Sept. 17)

Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence

Nominated for Cannes' Palme d'Or, Mamoru Oshii's lush follow-up to his 1995 anime cult hit shows an advanced society where the distinction between human and humanoid doesn't exist. (Sept. 17)

Paparazzi

Producer Mel Gibson pitched the story about a series of murders planned by an actor who doesn't seem to like photographers. The film (with Tom Sizemore and Cole Hauser, below) marks the feature directorial debut of Gibson's former barber. Seriously. (Sept. 3)



Paper Clips

In 1998, the students of Tennessee's Whitwell Middle School set out to collect 6 million paper clips to visualize the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. What the 425 predominantly white classmates lack in diversity, they make up for in heart...and steel. (Sept. 8)

Resident Evil: Apocalypse

Milla Jovovich returns to the videogame spin-off with another

movie involving a viral outbreak and the subsequent proliferation of bloodthirsty zombies. But this one's special, if for no other reason than it's set in a place named Raccoon City. (Sept. 10)



When Will I Be Loved

Vamp of all vamps Neve Campbell (above) really knows men in James Toback's modern-day noir that mixes *Double Indemnity* and *Honeymoon in Vegas* with an Altmanesque assemblage, but friskier. Much friskier. (Sept. 10)

+ PLUS

Voted best first film at last year's Cannes film festival, Cristoffer Boe's *Reconstruction* is a twisty tale of infidelity and loss of identity.... In the Merchant Ivory farce *Merci Docteur Rey*, the son of an opera diva unwittingly witnesses the snuffing of his long-lost father.... Eight New Yorkers deal with self-doubt, emotional dishonesty, and other uplifting subjects in *Particles of Truth*.... The first post-Taliban film shot on Afghan soil, Don Larson's *September Tapes* follows a bounty hunter hot on the trail of Osama bin Laden.... After the rise of fundamentalism in 1979 Pakistan, an overprotective mom strives to shield her nationalist son in *Silent Waters*.... Two brothers battle it out physically and ideologically in *Tae Guk Gi: The*

Brotherhood of War, set during the Korean War.... In the Hong Kong Import *Infernal Affairs*, a gang member posing as a cop tangles with a cop posing as a



gang member.... An Italian family man wants both his wife and his hot mistress (*The Passion of the Christ*'s Monica Bellucci, above) to *Remember Me, My Love*....

Amid Nazi occupation, a Czech medical student must abandon her urbane lifestyle for an isolated mountain community in the 2003 Oscar nominee *Zelary*.... To show off his *Testosterone*, a graphic novelist hooks up with a bellboy and assaults several women while searching for his Argentine lover (Antonio Sabato Jr.).... Gudrun, the female leader of the left-wing German group *The Raspberry Reich*, forces her male followers to, er, fornicate with one another to prove their loyalty.... Narrated by Julie Christie and Marianne Faithfull,

Bruce Weber's documentary *A Letter to True* is a valentine to his golden retrievers.

October

Around the Bend

Jason Lair (Josh Lucas) wants a normal life for himself and his son. Considering that Christopher Walken plays Jason's estranged father—who returns for a soul-searching, multigenerational road trip when his pop (Michael Caine) dies—it's not gonna happen. (Oct. 1)

Being Julia

Lighter fare from Oscar-winning *Pianist* screenwriter Ronald Harwood. Annette Bening takes center stage as a 1930s London theater actress who cheats on her husband (Jeremy Irons) with her biggest fan—then plots revenge against her paramour when his affections prove false. (Oct. 15)

DIG!

And we thought Metallica had problems. Behold the rocky friendship between Anton Newcombe of the Brian Jonestown Massacre and Courtney Taylor of the Dandy Warhols. Winner of the

Wicker Park

First Josh Hartnett mysteriously loses the girl of his dreams, and then another girl of his dreams with the same name appears, in a remake of the French psychological thriller *L'Appartement*. (Sept. 3)



Raise Your Voice

Reeling from the loss of her big brother (Jason Ritter), Hilary Duff heads to a competitive summer music program and learns about more than her art. No doubt the most moving musical teen drama since *Crossroads*. (Oct. 8)

Documentary Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and a place on EW's annual Must List. (Oct. 1)

The Dust Factory

Young Ryan (*Mean Creek*'s Ryan Kelley) has been mute since witnessing his father's death. That is, until he falls from a bridge and lands in the titular fantasy realm, where he meets pretty Melanie (*Remember the Titans*' Hayden Panettiere). (Oct. 15)

Eulogy

Misfit Zoëy Deschanel turns to her dysfunctional family to help write her grandfather's eulogy. Not surprisingly, her porn-star dad (Hank Azaria), kooky uncle (Ray Romano), and lesbian and conservative aunts (Kelly Preston and Debra Winger, respectively) have nothing nice to say. (Oct. 29)

I Am David

Freaks and Geeks creator Paul Feig helms a different kind of coming-of-age story—this one based on Anne Holm's novel about a boy who escapes a 1950s Eastern European prison camp. With Jim Caviezel and Joan Plowright. (Oct. 8)

It's All About Love

But it's not a romantic comedy. Instead, it's set in the future, where Claire Danes is a figure

skater whose divorce from Joaquin Phoenix gets complicated. Sean Penn costars. Thomas Vinterberg (*The Celebration*) broke his own *Dogma* 95 code to shoot this Hitchcockian thriller. (Oct. 29)



Lightning in a Bottle

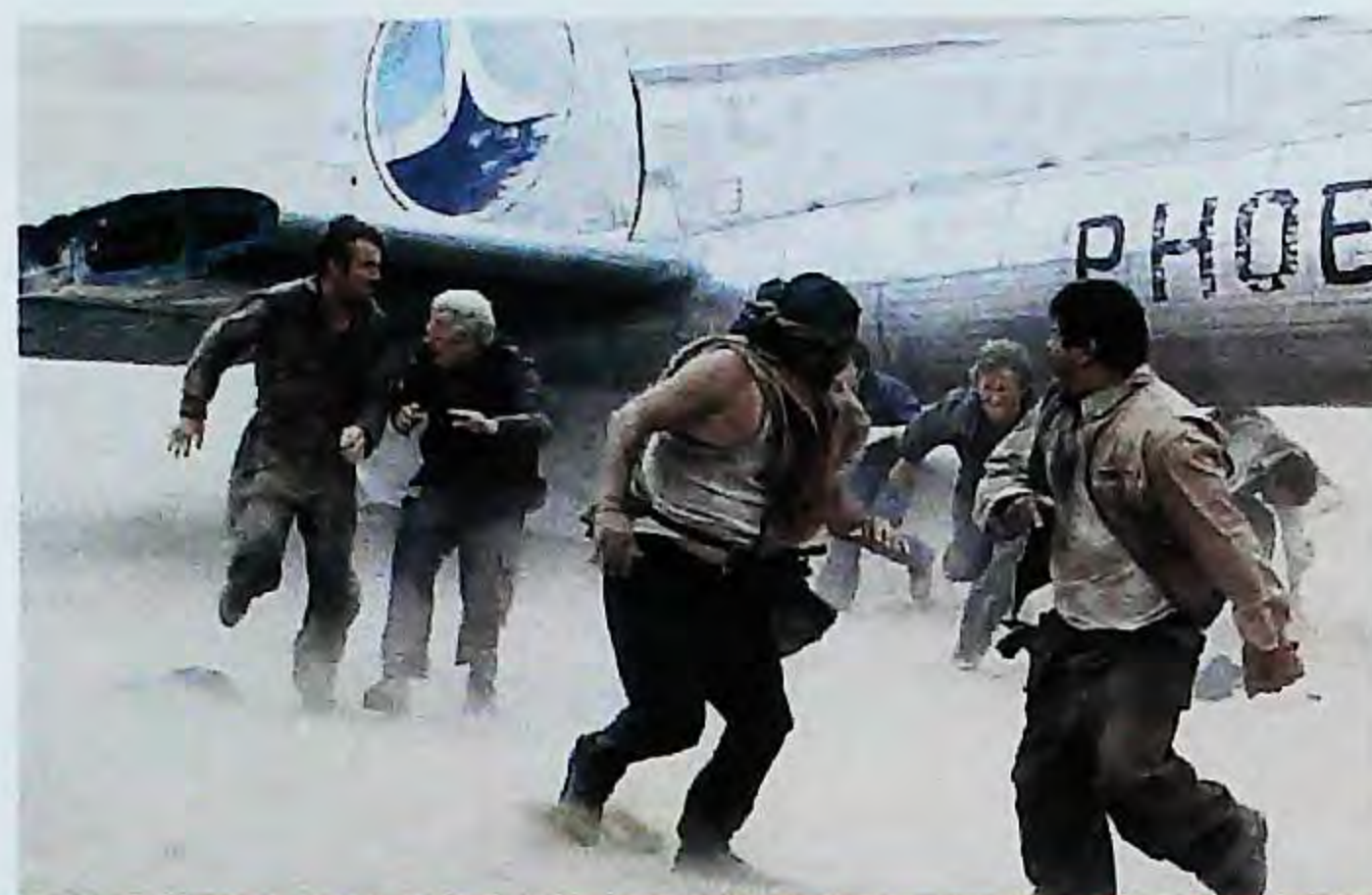
More than a concert film, it's a course in the blues, courtesy of exec producer Martin Scorsese. Instructors include B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Bonnie Raitt, Keb' Mo', Macy Gray, and Steven Tyler and Joe Perry (above). (Oct. 15)

Primer

The Sundance catalog referred to this \$7,000 thriller from engineer-cum-director Shane Carruth as "intermittently incomprehensible," but it still took home a Grand Jury Prize. Low-rung inventors accidentally build a time machine, and, um, chaos ensues. (Oct. 8)

P.S.

A romantic fable from *Roger Dodger* director Dylan Kidd? We're



Flight of the Phoenix

An update of the 1965 Jimmy Stewart classic finds Dennis Quaid, Giovanni Ribisi, model Tyrese Gibson, Hugh Laurie, and *The Lord of the Rings'* Miranda Otto stranded in the Mongolian desert following a plane crash. (Nov. 24)

in. It stars Laura Linney as a grad-school admissions officer who takes an interest in an applicant (Topher Grace) bearing a striking resemblance to her true love—who died 20 years earlier. (Oct. 15)



Saw

Ever have those days when you awake to find yourself chained to a pipe in a grubby underground chamber with only a dead body and a handsaw just strong enough to cut bone by your side? Gary Elwes (above) is Dr. Lawrence Gordon, one of two such detainees, in first-time director James Wan's perverse serial-killer thriller. Danny Glover and Tobin Bell costar. (Oct. 1)

Tarnation

Jonathan Caouette uses old Super-8 movies, snapshots, answering-machine messages (and Apple's iMovie program) to

document his escape from a damaging childhood and his return to care for a mentally ill mother. John Cameron Mitchell and Gus Van Sant are exec producers. (Oct. 6)

+ PLUS

In *Bright Future*, a convicted murderer bequeaths his best pal a poisonous jellyfish. Yes, a jellyfish.... Thrown out of his house for being gay, black artist Perry dis-

covers the glory of the Harlem Renaissance in *Brother to Brother*.... A jerk dukes it out with a stud for a girl in *Beverly Hills, 90210* alumnus Brian "A." Green's directing debut *Fish Without a Bicycle*.... Bill Pullman stars as Rick, a disgruntled corporate cog who decides to stick it to The Man.... The strides and setbacks encountered by same-sex-marriage proponents are seen in the documentary *Tying the Knot*.... *Pumping Iron* director George Butler gives John Kerry the Schwarzenegger treatment in *Going Upriver: The Long War of John Kerry*.... A filmmaker (Anne Parillaud) must convince her bickering lead actors to kiss and make up in *Sex Is Comedy*....

Based on their BBC2 cult comedy, Phil Cornwell and John Sessions mimic famous actors who grow sick of their celebrity and move to *Stella Street*.... *The Child I Never Was* delves into the psychology of German child molester and murderer Jürgen Bartsch.... An Irish reporter uncovers a *Conspiracy of Silence* while investigating a beloved priest's apparent suicide.... On a pilgrimage to Mashad from Tehran, a photographer and a woman are stranded in a *Deserted Station* after their car breaks down.... A group of Clint Eastwood wannabes must protect

their Western-themed tourist trap after a lawyer threatens to tear the place down in *800 Bullets*.... Nurse Klivia oversees a menagerie of mentally challenged patients in the musical *Yes Nurse! No Nurse!*.... A British lieutenant investigates whether *Monsieur N.* (that's Napoléon Bonaparte to you) really died on the isle of St. Helena.... Actor/author/Bishop T.D. Jakes helps an abuse victim come



Fat Albert

Hey hey hey! *SNL*'s Kenan Thompson yuks it up as the big guy from Philly in this live-action adaptation of Bill Cosby's animated 1970s series. Along for the ride are Aaron Carter and Cosby kid Raven. (Dec. 25)

to terms with her past in this adaptation of his book *Woman, Thou Art Loosed!*.... A young mom (Emily Mortimer, above, with Gerard Butler) struggles with the decision to tell her 9-year-old son the truth about his dad in *Dear Frankie*.... May-December lovers Nina and Hamo bond in a graveyard in *Vodka Lemon*.... Not even the topic of female circumcision can deter director Ousmane Sembene from including musical numbers in his polemical drama *Moolaadé* (*Sanctuary*).

November

Callas Forever

A fictional homage to the late Maria Callas by Franco Zeffirelli. *8 Women's* Fanny Ardant plays the opera diva, whose former manager (Jeremy Irons) encourages her to lip-synch her classic *Carmen* recordings in a new film. (Nov. 5)

Overnight

See budding filmmaker Troy Duffy cozy up to Harvey Weinstein and sell him a screenplay. See Troy squander his development deal. See Troy's colleagues capture it all on tape and turn it into this documentary. (Nov. 10)

The Ringer

The Farrelly brothers (*Stuck on You*) produced this comedy about

a businessman (Johnny Knoxville) who decides to scam the Special Olympics by feigning being mentally challenged. (Nov. 12)

Seed of Chucky

It's tough being a teen—especially when your parents are homicidal talking dolls. In *Seed* (below), the fifth installment of the schlocky horror franchise, *The Lord of the Rings'* Billy Boyd joins the crew as the voice of reluctant puppet spawn Glen. (Nov. 10)



A Very Long Engagement

Poor Audrey Tautou. In this adaptation of Sébastien Japrisot's novel, she spends time in a wheelchair, her fiancé may have died fighting in World War I, and there's no crème brûlée in sight. Maybe costar Jodie Foster can help her make sense of her world. (Nov. 26)

+ PLUS

Though inspired by Japanese puppet theater, the heroes of *Dolls*, which interweaves three separate love stories, have no strings at-

FALL MOVIE PREVIEW COMING SOON

ry ways in *Shem*.... It's temptation island when a couple gets romantically involved with a Panamanian guide in *Contadora Is For Lovers*.... A burly dentist finds himself a parent when his sister disappears and leaves her son behind in *Bear Cub*.... A blend of news footage and fiction, Jean-Luc Godard's *Our Music* is a rumination on 20th-century conflicts.... A Turkish-German couple learn to tackle their cultural differences *Head On*.... In *The Two of Us*, an anti-Semite unwittingly takes in a Jewish boy.

December

The Assassination of Richard Nixon

Much as you dislike a guy, it's never a good idea to attempt to kill him. Especially if he's the president of the United States. Sam Bricke (Sean Penn) discovers this fact the hard way in this political thriller costarring Naomi Watts and Don Cheadle. (December)

Bride and Prejudice

Mr. Darcy, meet Miss...Bakshi? Ditching Empire-waisted gowns for colorful saris, Indian director Gurinder Chadha gives Jane

Austen the Bollywood treatment in her first film since 2002's surprise hit *Bend It Like Beckham*. (Dec. 25)



House of Flying Daggers

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's Zhang Ziyi (above) takes to the skies again as Mel, a martial-arts-happy dancer who is suspected of aiding a revolutionary faction during the Tang dynasty. It's up to two earthbound police deputies to help clip her wings. (Dec. 3)

Imaginary Heroes

Headed up by Sigourney Weaver and Jeff Daniels, the Travis family is left in a tizzy after their son (Kip Pardue) commits suicide in this dark comedy from X2 scribe Dan Harris. (Dec. 10)

+ PLUS

A retired store owner, a traveling salesman, and a destitute mother navigating southern Patagonia's deserted roads find they have *Intimate Stories* in common.... The inspiring documentary *Born Into Brothels* (this year's Sundance Audience Award winner) is New York photographer Zana Briski's stunning snapshot of Calcutta's red-light district, and the feisty children who roam its streets.

All dates subject to change.

EDITED BY Cynthia Grisolia
WRITTEN AND REPORTED BY
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Hotel Rwanda

Channeling his inner Schindler, hotelier Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle) sticks it to the ruling Hutu militia by saving the lives of more than 1,200 oppressed Tutsis during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Joaquin Phoenix and Nick Nolte costar. (Dec. 24)



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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

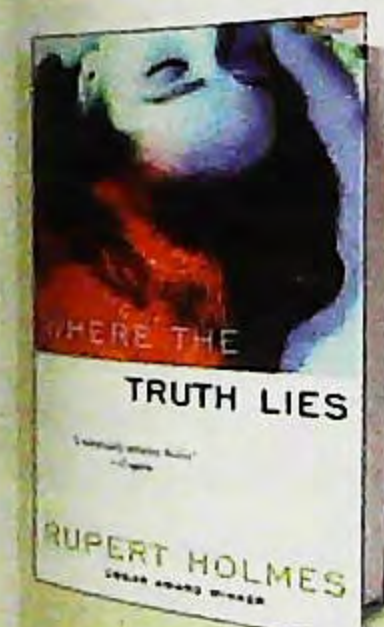
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The Must List

The Coreys, the Gottis, and 8 other things we love this week



1 THE LOST BOYS Ooh, hottie teen vampires! The special-edition DVD of the 1987 romp includes—yes!—a featurette reuniting the Coreys Haim and Feldman.



6 WHERE THE TRUTH LIES, by Rupert Holmes

He wrote the ML fave "Escape [Pina Colada Song]." His first novel—about a '60s comedy team driven apart by a mysterious death—is just as sweet.

7 STANDER The true story of South African cop-turned-robber Andre Stander (Thomas Jane) is a gripping look at an antihero of apartheid-era Johannesburg.

8 I, FATTY, by Jerry Stahl In this hilarious faux memoir, the *Permanent Midnight* author imagines the life of silent film star Fatty Arbuckle, whose career was destroyed by lurid accusations.

9 WILL FERRELL AS DUBYA See the clip on whitehousewest.com to see how funny farm tools can be—then realize how much you'll miss Will on *SNL* this fall.



2 NIGHT GAL- LERY: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON It's been 34 years since the frightful TV classic (now on DVD) first aired, but that Rod Serling still freaks us out.

3 FACES BOXED SET Remember when Rod Stewart was cool? Pop in this four-disc set of remastered recordings from the band that made him, and you will.

4 ERLEND ØYE The Kings of Convenience singer takes to the turntables for the danceable *DJ-Kicks*, spicing up the mix by sampling his own covers of Elvis and Bananarama. The Norwegian band's latest, *Riot on an Empty Street*, isn't bad either.

5 MIKE HALL on 'Sports-Center'

The *Dream Job* winner shows himself worthy of the anchor seat on ESPN's nightly ritual.



10 GROWING UP GOTTI Ex-Mob princess Victoria Gotti's three sons turn wearing hair gel and grunting in protest into an art form on A&E's hit reality-com.



Feel like sushi tonight?

our fingers, waiting for the horrid deliverance we're not quite sure we want to see. The film is based on real events, but it also ratchets up the jittery off-beat rhythms and harrowingly unstable, surface-of-the-water eye views of *Jaws*; if anything, it may be even more intense in its gathering ripples of dread. Kentis is that rare director, a humanist who is also a teasing sadist.

From the start, he draws us with voyeuristic cunning into the tensions between Susan, a no-nonsense beauty with a high-stress job as a TV sports producer, and Daniel, the geeky "enlightened" mate she needles in order to

work off her resentment. They're presented as an archetypal 21st-century couple. She's the stronger of the two, which, ironically, is the source of her testiness: She's with a man who's too namby-pamby in his empathy. Their first night of vacation, he fails to arouse her sexually, and Kentis, who draws lifelike performances from both actors (Ryan, who resembles a blowsier Charlize Theron, is especially good), does a marvelous job of letting this routine domestic discord slide into a generalized mood of unease. On the boat the next morning, the camera is almost cruel in its mingling of objectivity and silent fate, observing a random series of events—a forgotten diving mask,

a mistaken head count—that will result in the boat leaving to return to shore without them.

The couple's gradual realization that they've been forgotten, abandoned without a thought, is a powerfully disquieting reminder of how the protections of civilization can fall away. *Open Water* becomes a slow and steady descent into pure fear. Kentis has a born filmmaker's instinct for physical detail. He uses the sound of lapping waves to submerge us along with Susan and Daniel, and he turns the simplest of events—a plane passing overhead, a desperately brandished knife—into gripping motifs of hope, vulnerability, and danger. He also exploits the situation for a kind of nervous yuppie gallows humor. "We wanted an ocean view," screams Daniel. "Boy, did we get it!"

Open Water has a knowing edge. It counts, with a wink, on our awareness of *Jaws*, with its merciless vision of what a shark can do, and also on the lore that Steven Spielberg's film helped usher into popular culture—the notion, for example, that a shark's instinct is generally to swim past humans in the water, but that they're drawn like addicts to the spill of blood. The sharks that we see on screen here are all real, and that ingenious use of the ultimate no-budget special effect cuts both ways. The smooth gray bodies, with their flattened heads and grimaces of teeth, make you queasy with anxiety—you can't help but meditate on what that awful bite might feel like—yet if the actors themselves weren't actually in mortal danger, perhaps the characters aren't either. Right to the end, you have no idea what's going to happen in *Open Water*. When that end arrives, it's a singular and haunting moment: an image of terror acknowledged and transcended. Somewhere, I believe, Alfred Hitchcock is smiling. **A**

Getting Chummy

The frightfully terrific *Open Water* will restore your fear of the unfriendly deep blue sea. by Owen Gleiberman

Blanchard Ryan, Daniel Travis
R, 79 mins. (Lions Gate)

Movies that set out to frighten us almost always have a structure that is secretly reassuring. The audience knows, more or less, when the scary climaxes are coming, and we let out a collective sigh of relief when they're over. *Open Water*, the terrifying new independent thriller, doesn't let us off the hook in that way. Chris Kentis, who wrote, directed, and edited the film, and also served (along with his wife, Laura Lau) as its co-cinematographer, shot *Open Water* on digital video, and he uses the slightly flat, present-tense quality of DV to create the illusion that everything he shows us has been caught on the fly—that we're seeing a drama in the

style of a documentary about an all-too-plausible nightmare. In a movie like this one, style becomes suspense, with the zero-frills video aesthetic telling us, in every frame, that there is no cozy protection, no higher power—not God, not a studio focus group—to sway and redeem the outcome. The characters are on their own, and so is the audience.

For most of *Open Water*, we're staring at nothing more than the sky, the endless ocean, and a pair of nerve-jangled scuba divers, Daniel (Daniel Travis) and Susan (Blanchard Ryan), who are stranded in the middle of it. The two have been left behind, accidentally, by a resort boat during their vacation on an unspecified Caribbean island. As they float and bob and argue in the

water, trying to figure out how to save themselves, not much time goes by before they catch their first glimpse of a shark fin. The two could be attacked at any second—or not. When one of them feels, say, a sting on the leg, we suck in our breath: Is *this* the moment we're going to have to watch someone's limb bitten off?

In spirit, *Open Water* reduces us to children peering through



Super-Duper Spy of the Week

STEVE CARELL

It's true, Chief! The ex-*Daily Show* correspondent will step into Don Adams' KAOS-fightin', Agent 99-lovin' phone shoes for Warner Bros.' update of the 1960s spy spoof *Get Smart*.



Watch out for royalty who can't control their own backyard

THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2: ROYAL ENGAGEMENT
Anne Hathaway, Julie Andrews
G, 120 mins. (Disney)

Once upon a time, there was a far less charming sequel...

Monarchy is still the best system of government for the glittery realm of Chickflickia, offering more pomp, more romance, and more pretty horses

than either democracy or fundamentalism can provide. That said, this unworthy serf humbly and non-Marxistly wonders what it offers today's youngsters.

In the first *Princess Diaries*, awkward San Francisco teen Mia Thermopolis (radiant regular-gal Anne Hathaway) discovered she was heir to the throne of Genovia, a fictitious European land-of-many-accents. We didn't see much of Genovia itself, only its queen, Clarisse (Julie Andrews),

in Frisco playing fairy godmother to Mia. This allowed director Garry Marshall to tease gentle, G-rated laughs out of the guiltiest American fantasy—royalty—without negotiating the details of modern princessery. (Recall, he avoided the messier details of another guilty American fantasy in *Pretty Woman*.) Not so this time. Mia, having graduated Princeton in poli sci, is now off to rule Euro Disney, er, Genovia. But not only must she win her people's hearts (by displaying empathy for, yes, orphans), she must also marry, according to an antiquated law. "So unfair!" she frets, echoing the frustrations of many young girls who...what? Have their own theme-park nations to play with? The film's generic feminism pales beside its bloated sense of privilege, only underlined by a nonstop cabaret of sideshow acts. Speaking of which: Who decided to drop a beat behind Andrews' corny-but-touching vocal number? Off with his/her head! **C**—Scott Brown

Critical Mass

Here's how a sampling of critics from across the country grade 10 current releases.



	JAMI BERNARD (NY Times)	TY BURR (Boston Globe)	MIKE CLARK (USA Today)	JOANNA CONNORS (Ozark State Press-Scimitar)	ROGER EBERT (Chicago Sun-Times)	LIAM LACEY (Los Angeles Times)	MICK LASALLE (San Francisco Chronicle)	TODD MCCARTHY (Variety)	CARRIE RICKEY (Philadelphia Inquirer)	RENE RODRIGUEZ (The Miami Herald)	ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY	EW READERS*	CRITICS' AVERAGE
BOURNE SUPREMACY	B-	B+	B-	B	B	B+	B-	B	B-	B+	A	A-	B
COLLATERAL	A-	B-	A-	A	B+	A-	B	B+	B+	B+	B+	B+	B+
GARDEN STATE	B	B-	C-	B+	B	B	-	C	B+	B	B	B+	B-
HAROLD & KUMAR...	-	-	C+	B	B	C+	B-	-	C	B-	B+	B	B-
LITTLE BLACK BOOK	C	-	-	D	B	C	C+	-	D	-	D	C+	C-
MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE	A-	B	C+	B	B+	B+	B	B+	A-	B+	B-	B+	B
MARIA FULL OF GRACE	B+	-	B+	-	B+	-	-	B	A-	A-	A	A-	B+
SHE HATE ME	-	C+	D+	-	B-	-	-	-	C	D-	F	C-	C-
STANDER	-	B	-	-	C+	-	-	-	-	A-	B	B	B
▲ THE VILLAGE	C+	C-	F	C-	D	C	D+	C-	B	C-	B-	B	C

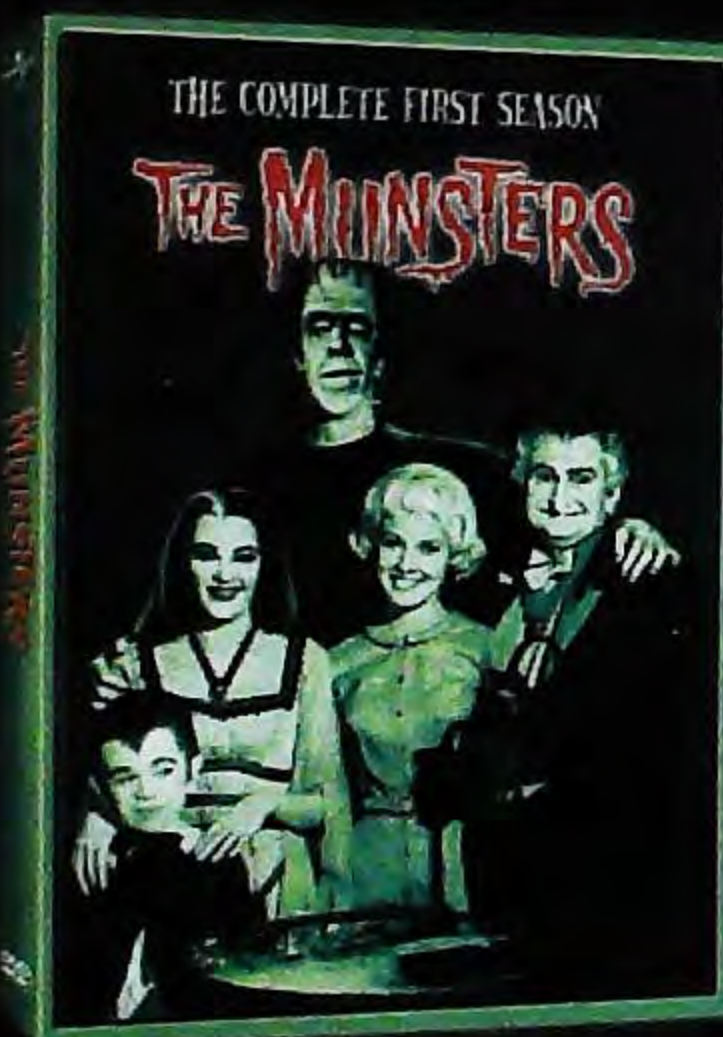
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+ Movies



Who's up for a
game of married
spin the bottle?

WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

Mark Ruffalo, Naomi Watts, Peter Krause
R, 103 mins. (Warner Independent)

The cheat is on for two
couples buried in marital blitz

Virtually no one would deny that adultery is a form of betrayal, but only rarely is it presented on screen as more than that. It's occasionally allowed to be sexy, usually muffled by guilt. What films almost never have the daring or sophistication to show is that adultery can be less a violation of life than a desperate, deeply urgent expression of it. *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, a wrenchingly intimate drama of marital infidelity, is the kind of movie for, and about, grown-ups that people used to talk about wanting to see but that just about no one makes anymore. Written by Larry Gross, who based it on two short stories by Andre Dubus (whose "Killings" became *In the Bedroom*), and directed by John Curran, the film is at times harrowing to watch, yet it's also wry and delicate and absorbing. It's infused with the messy excitement of imperfect passion.

Jack (Mark Ruffalo) and Hank (Peter Krause) are 40ish English professors who are enjoying the summer off in their small, pastoral college town. The two jog and drink together, sharing weary macho confessions, yet they're only half honest; both are stuck in marriages that are quietly dying. As a drunken dinner party winds down, it takes us a few minutes to sort out, through all the flirting and dancing, who is actually married to whom.

Jack and his wife, the depressed, self-

medicating Terry (Laura Dern), still need each other, yet the pressures of raising a family have ground them into a mutual unhappiness that they acknowledge in occasional screaming matches, only to sweep it back under the rug. Hank and Edith (Naomi Watts), by contrast, are the picture of smooth functionality, only it's a false picture: He worships their young daughter and devotes himself to writing fiction and poetry, yet he's also a poker-faced academic sleaze who has never been faithful.

Beaming out of this dark tangle of relationships is a ray of light: Jack and Edith are having an affair, and it's a blissful one—erotic, emotional, a union of affection and spirit. As they meet up in town, then make love in the woods, Ruffalo and Watts forge a tender and moving bond, even as we're lured into the thorny practical intrigue of the characters' attempts to arrange an afternoon tryst. Do their spouses know? It's part of the film's subtle emotional force to recognize that this extramarital connection, while far from the vulgar act of "wife swapping," really involves all four people. It's a playing out, maybe even an exorcism, of their fragile private demons.

We Don't Live Here Anymore doesn't have anything like a conventional story. It ebbs and flows on currents of hope and anger, lust and despair, and if that's a high-wire way to make a movie, Gross and Curran have crafted it with stunning skill. It's the acting, however, that leaves one breathless. I won't soon forget Ruffalo's vulnerability, Krause's acerbic self-delusion, Watts' radiant sadness, or the flat-out brilliance of Laura Dern, whose face, twisted with love and torment, becomes an emblem of the movie's cathartic honesty. **A** —OG

BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

Stephen Campbell Moore, Emily Mortimer
R, 105 mins. (THINKFilm)

A cast of Britain's finest take
on a wicked romantic satire

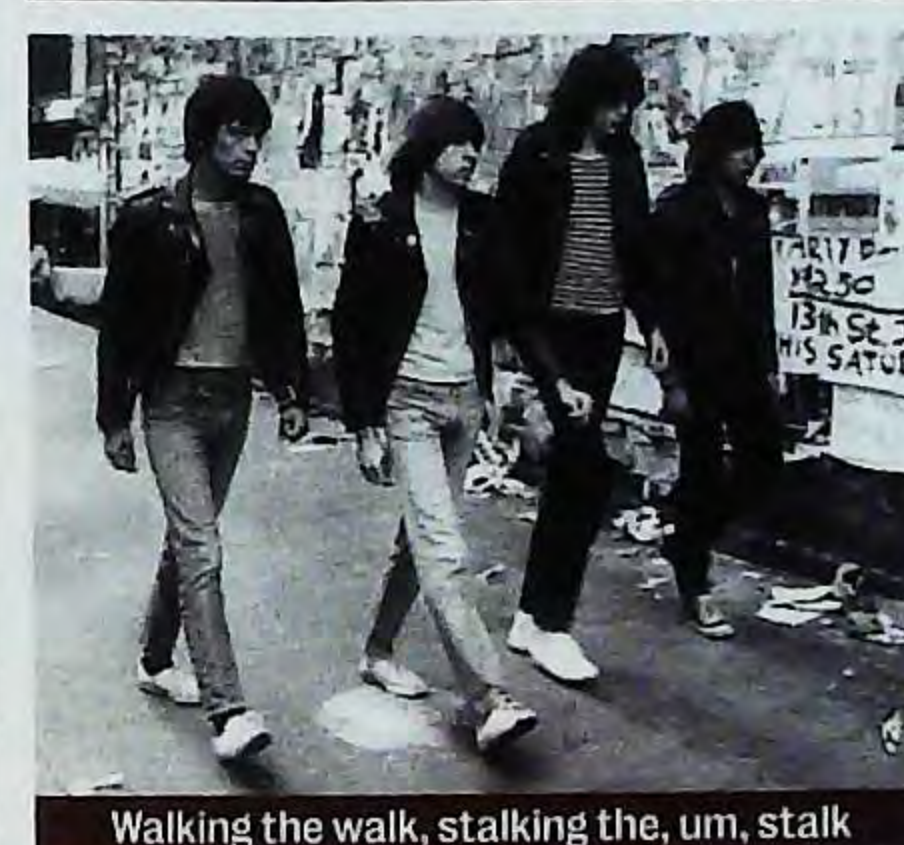
Catapulted some 50 years into the age of neon and cocaine, the blithely uncaring junior British celebutantes who populate *Bright Young Things* might have found soul mates among the denizens of *Less Than Zero*. Both crowds party in brittle pursuit of whatever's trendy; both wreak casual but real emotional damage on one another. As such, *BYT* sweethearts Adam Symes (Stephen Campbell Moore) and Nina Blount (Emily Mortimer) fox-trot through a courtship dependent on the state of Adam's finances and ability to maintain Nina in the proto-Paris Hilton style to which she has become accustomed.

The screenplay for *Bright Young Things* is adapted from the great British satirist Evelyn Waugh's prescient 1930 novel *Vile Bodies*, and both script and direction are the work of the glittering comedic polymath Stephen Fry. It's



Your stiff upper lip is chafing, darling

more difficult than ever, I think, to pull off a British period costume-drama that doesn't look like it was unpacked from the mid-1980s *Masterpiece Theatre* circus trunk. Fry's sprightly attempt doesn't entirely avoid some of the clichés of drawing-room dramas actually set in drawing rooms, but his instincts are, happily, subversive. His cast is creme de la Brit (including Jim Broadbent, Imelda Staunton, Peter O'Toole, and 94-year-old John Mills). And Fry treats his bumbling characters—like the coarse Canadian publisher Lord Monomark (Dan Aykroyd) and the earnest evangelist Mrs. Melrose Ape (Stockard Channing)—with contagious erupting glee. **B** —LS



Walking the walk, stalking the, um, stalk

END OF THE CENTURY:

The Story of the Ramones
Unrated, 110 mins. (Magnolia Pictures)

Listen up, punks, as the
Ramones' legend spews forth!

It's clearer now than it was in the 1970s that the Ramones played exhilarating, hooky bubble-gum pop that just happened to get spit out with the force of machine-gun fire. Okay, it didn't *just* come out that way; the velocity was central to their barbed kamikaze joy. Yet as you watch *End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones*, a documentary that digs deep inside this most revolutionary and tortured of punk quartets, it's hard not to feel that the Ramones, who never had a hit record, were the greatest band in 50 years to be stonewalled out of success. They couldn't get to first base with the radio establishment, but really—"Sheena Is a Punk Rocker"? That should have been as big as anything by AC/DC or Nirvana.

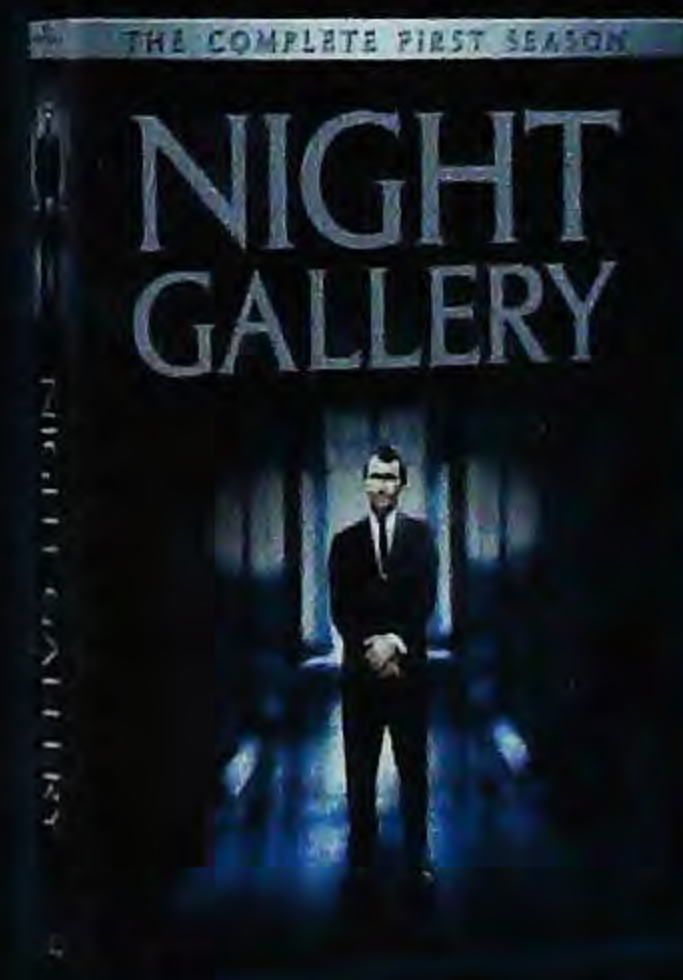
The tragic, and also comic, theme of *End of the Century* is that the Ramones, who were kings of the black leather demimonde but couldn't cross over, played out their frustration by hating each other. Joey, the weak-chinned string-bean geek who found vengeance on stage (and nowhere else), never forgave Johnny, the disciplined rock martinet, for stealing his girlfriend. The film is studded with sensational anecdotes, from journalist Legs McNeil's account of how when the Ramones took the stage at CBGB, "It looked like the SS had just walked in," to the fascinating and twisted tale of how producer Phil Spector, armed with guns and a recording console, tried and failed to turn them into pop idols. The world wasn't quite ready for the Ramones. Even Johnny Rotten, we learn, was terrified to meet them. Maybe he should have been: No gutter gods ever reached higher. **B+** —OG

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One luftballon too many
DANNY DECKCHAIR
Rhys Ifans, Miranda Otto
PG-13, 90 mins. (Lions Gate)

An Aussie fish-above-water comedy that's full of hot air

Hail globalism: Sweet, dumb American movies can now be made anywhere in the world. Take a film with say, Owen Wilson and Lisa Kudrow, and substitute vaguely respectable actors (with vaguely respectable accents) like Rhys Ifans (*Notting Hill*) and Miranda Otto (*Lord of the Rings*) and you've got yourself a feathery art-house lark. *Danny* is the Australian breed of this gawky bird, whose markings include a regular-guy protag (Ifans, as wistful working-stiff Danny) and an improbable, life-changing crisis: Despondent in his suburban Sydney rut, Danny attaches helium balloons to a lawn chair and floats away to a simpler place, the tiny outback town of Clarence (a stunt most famously attempted by Angeleno Larry Walters in 1982). Back on earth, Danny sheds his Paleolithic chin scruff and meets a fellow castaway-from-life, parking cop Glenda (Otto); they begin a cautious, adorably predictable pas de deux. Never mind the blimp-size plot holes: It's a soothing stoner tableau, a fine dropout fantasy. So why overload it with thematic ballast (media hysteria, populism)? Note to *Danny*: A deck chair can support only so much. **C**—SB

MEAN CREEK
Rory Culkin, Josh Peck
R, 89 mins. (Paramount Classics)

Revenge is a dish best served on a cruise down a river

The title *Mean Creek* is a kind of plainspoken, water-borne homage to *River's Edge*, a beloved and influential 1986 movie about adolescent moral choices. But really, first-time writer-director Jacob Estes' terrifically harrowing tale of a bully, a victim, and a plan for revenge is as much an economical teenage version of *Heart of Darkness*: The young

times, the smaller, shyer 13-year-old Sam (Rory Culkin, who shows a sophisticated taste by choosing projects like *Igby Goes Down* and *You Can Count on Me*) confesses his torment to his older brother Rocky (Trevor Morgan from *The Patriot*). And Rocky dreams up a suitable retaliation involving mild harassment and major humiliation: They'll invite George on a birthday party riverboating trip and then, at the appropriate time downstream, pants the creep and leave him wet and naked.

In classic band-of-brothers form, Estes establishes the contours of the avenging party in



Mechlowicz and Culkin are up the Creek. But with paddles.

people paddling downstream on a soft summer day in this unusually perceptive and fluid American indie have little idea what personal crises they're in for, or on what shore their shared trauma will deposit them.

Indeed, all they have in mind when they begin is some excellent revenge on a kid who clearly deserves it. George (Josh Peck from Nickelodeon's *The Amanda Show*) is fat, nasty, and provocatively obnoxious, with a swaggering aggression that can turn ugly at the trip of a verbal trigger. After being the victim of George's violence one too many

concise strokes. Rocky enlists another older teen rebel, Marty (Scott Mechlowicz), whose own internal demons make him all too joylessly happy to participate. Clyde (*Smallville*'s Ryan Kelley) joins up as a respite from fending off taunting accusations of homosexuality. Millie (Carly Schroeder from *Lizzie McGuire*) is included among the boys because she's Sam's budding girlfriend.

But as Estes builds toward inevitable crisis and surprising consequence, suspending the tension with handsomely impressionistic handheld cinematography (much of it shot with available light by

Sharone Meir on the water near the Oregon/Washington border), the filmmaker simultaneously unleashes his most unnerving psychological weapon: George is a bully, but he's also a lonely, sensitive kid who keeps a poetic video diary. This tormenting provocateur, capable of such unrelenting cruelty, is also brought up well enough to recognize the dangers of not wearing seat belts or life jackets; because he believes he has been invited to a birthday party, he politely brings a gift. It's rare to see an actor of any age, let alone a teen like the usually comedic Peck, carry off the challenge of portraying ugliness and

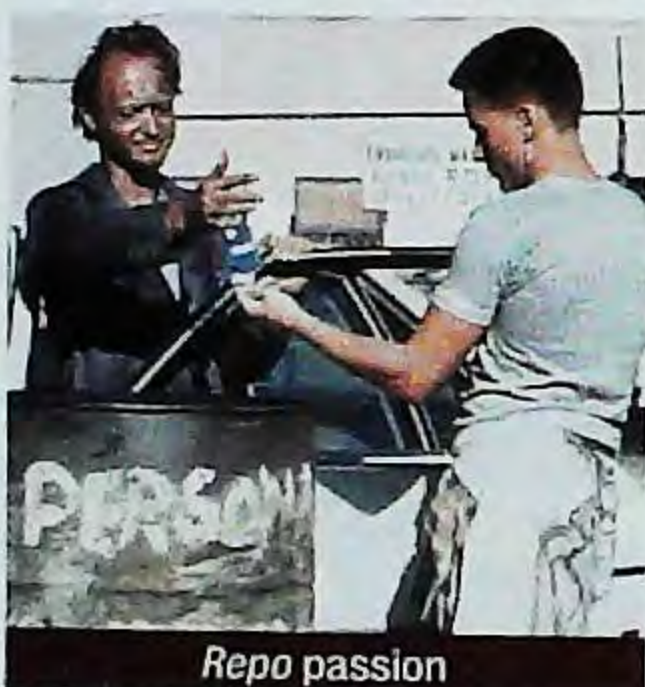
vulnerability with such aplomb. And although the talent of a kid with the last name of Culkin may not, at this point, register as such a novelty—Rory follows brothers Macaulay and Kieran—there is something precociously mature but natural about the work of this youngest Culkin sibling that stands apart. His Sam is a marvel of believable hopes and anxieties, a boy who doesn't quite know how to kiss a girl or what the right thing is to do during a meltdown of group dynamics. But his instincts, like those of this impressive, modern morality tale, are sound. **A-**—LS

LOS ANGELES PLAYS ITSELF

Unrated, 169 mins. (Barton/Floyd)

The town so nice they named it once is a misunderstood star

Los Angeles has been the subject of such derisive indictments—*The Day of the Locust*, the bubble-brain-mecca satire of *Annie Hall*—that you can accept, and even enjoy, the prickly defensive spirit that Thom Andersen summons in his fascinating and exhaustive movie-love documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. This 2-hour-and-49-minute meditation on the ways that L.A. has been captured, distorted, and dressed up as a location by its most famous district, Hollywood, is a feast for film buffs, yet it's staunchly idiosyncratic: It at once celebrates and protests the very act of turning the boulevards and



Repo passion

stucco homes, the rococo landmarks and smoggy hills of Los Angeles into the stuff of fiction and even legend. Andersen worships his city so much that he yearns to see it represented—but never misrepresented. I think his attitude is prudish, even a bit loopy, yet maybe it took a cracked Los Angeles fetishist to make a chronicle of pop geography as obsessively entertaining as this one.

Andersen intercuts clips from sci-fi schlock and '40s noir, *Repo Man* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, gay porn and *Die Hard*. He then shows you the locations as they now appear, turning the entire palm-tree-and-concrete grid into a vérité Universal Studios tour. He captures how the flukiest modes of landscape, architecture, and design—the baroque tiers of the Bradbury Building, used for their decorous claustrophobia in films from the 1950 *D.O.A.* to *Blade Runner*; the chilly angular interiors of the city's modernist homes, inevitably used as villains' lairs—became iconic almost by accident. Gliding from the physical to the metaphysical, Andersen reveals how films like *Chinatown* effectively remade the reality of Los Angeles, replacing history with myth in a way that now anchors the city more than that history itself does. **A-**—OG

ASK THE CRITIC Lisa Schwarzbaum

Queasy Does It



Bourne joins the handheld bandwagon

Why are directors so hooked on handheld cameras? We just saw *The Bourne Supremacy*, which people liked, but we're feeling a bit carsick. —Peggy McHugh I'm guessing that in most cases, vertigo isn't the intended reaction, but you're right—many filmmakers are smitten these days with the artfully messy aesthetic of handheld camera work. And we can look to the combination of modern, lightweight technology and edgy sensibility for an explanation why. There's something immediate, intimate, personal, and just plain zippy conveyed by a scene shot by hand—think of the tour de force nightclub scene in Michael Mann's *Collateral*—and something newsworthy and tough, too, as if we're there on the case. (*Bourne* director Paul Greengrass shot his fact-based political nail-biter *Bloody Sunday* as a nerve-racking docudrama.) The handheld look suggests a liberated, nonfiction-style indifference to looking composed and "pretty." And as such, it's an easy way to indie up even the glossiest studio production.

SEND QUESTIONS TO ASKTHECRITIC@EW.COM, OR POST THEM ONLINE AT EW.COM/ASKTHECRITIC

Now Playing

CODE 46 *R*, 93 mins. It turns the freeways, skyscrapers, and office spaces of modern Shanghai into an ominously plausible nexus of the future. Tim Robbins and Samantha Morton make a sexy and moving pair of desperadoes in a movie whose noirish fatalism renders it a cousin to *Blade Runner*. **B+** (#778, Aug. 13)—OG

COLLATERAL *R*, 120 mins. Michael Mann's tensely funny and alive L.A. night-world thriller is, in its way, a very high-stakes buddy movie. Vincent (Tom Cruise), a hitman, hires Max (Jamie Foxx), a mellow cabbie who becomes his hostage, driver, and wary pupil in Nietzschean self-glory. The film generates suspense by dividing our sympathies in clever and unexpected ways. **B+** (#778, Aug. 13)—OG

GARDEN STATE *R*, 102 mins. *Scrubs* star and debut filmmaker Zach Braff sets his toothily winsome coming-of-age story, filled with loose, goof-about scenes of comic melancholy, in the New Jersey of his own youth. **B** (#777, Aug. 6)—LS

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE *R*, 87 mins. The heroes (John Cho and Kal Penn) embark on an all-night road trip in search of those luscious little burgers. Beyond their overt ethnicity, these two make having a brain look hip. **B+** (#777, Aug. 6)—OG

LITTLE BLACK BOOK *PG-13*, 105 mins. Ditzzy Stacy (Brittany Murphy) loves *Working Girl*, as well as her opaque cipher of a boyfriend (Ron Livingston). When she starts to investigate his exes, breathless and bug-eyed high jinks ensue. Exhausting, nonsensical, and borderline offensive to today's working girls. **D** (#778, Aug. 13)—Scott Brown

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE *R*, 130 mins. Meryl Streep's zany Hillary-esque version of a political dragon lady is the life of the party in a remake of the 1962 corker about politics and mind control—but the new film doesn't compare with the shock of the old. **B-** (#777, Aug. 6)—LS

MARIA FULL OF GRACE *R*, 101 mins. An extraordinary Spanish-language drama about a pregnant Colombian teenager (Catalina Sandino Moreno) transporting drugs to New York in her gut. **A** (#775, July 23)—LS

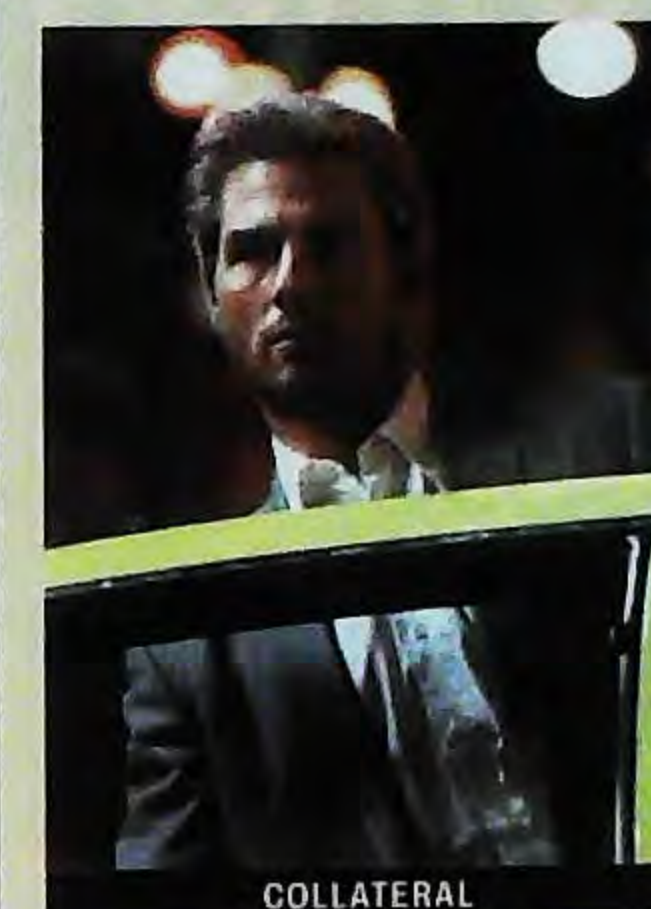
SHE HATE ME *R*, 138 mins. In Spike Lee's new film, the hero (Anthony Mackie) blows the whistle on his Enron/ImClone corporation and ends up impregnating a parade of lesbians. The movie is at once racist, homophobic, utterly fake, and unbearably tedious. **F** (#777, Aug. 6)—OG

STANDER *R*, 111 mins. *The Punisher's* Tom Jane is riveting in the title role of Bronwen Hughes' gripping true-life drama about a white South African police captain who robbed banks as a kind of twisted protest against apartheid. **A-** (#778, Aug. 13)—LS

THUNDERBIRDS *PG*, 95 mins. The 1960s Supermarionation-animated British TV show has been turned into a live-action *Spy Kids* clone. **C+** (#777, Aug. 6)—Gregory Kirschling

THE VILLAGE *PG-13*, 107 mins. M. Night Shyamalan's latest "Gotcha!" thriller, set in a 19th-century rural community, seems to be mapped from its ending backward. It's well acted and technically impressive, but, with every moment played to maximize a sense of portent, often eye-rolling solemn. **B-** (#777, Aug. 6)—Mark Harris

Box Office



COLLATERAL

THE TOM TOM CLUB

The laws of averages abounded as moviegoers spent \$24.7 million on the Tom Cruise-as-a-bad-guy taxicab thriller *Collateral*, average among the star's recent solid debuts like *The Last Samurai* (\$24.3 million) and *Vanilla Sky* (\$25 million). The opening weekend total was, however, above average for director Michael Mann—it was his career best. Attendance was well below average for *The Village* (No. 2), which plummeted a stunning 68 percent. Brittany Murphy's *Little Black Book* (No. 5) scored an average \$7.1 million premiere relative to its average budget, while the independent shark tale *Open Water* (No. 16) earned \$1.1 million on 47 screens, giving it—that's right—the week's highest average.

TOP 20

		WEEKEND GROSS*	NUMBER OF SITES	WEEKEND PER-SITE AVERAGE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE	WEEKS IN RELEASE	GROSS TO DATE
1	COLLATERAL	\$24.7	3,188	\$7,748	—	1	\$24.7
2	THE VILLAGE	\$16.5	3,733	\$4,412	-68	2	\$85.6
3	THE BOURNE SUPREMACY	\$14.4	3,304	\$4,355	-40	3	\$124.6
4	MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE	\$10.3	2,867	\$3,577	-49	2	\$38.0
5	LITTLE BLACK BOOK	\$7.1	2,445	\$2,894	—	1	\$7.1
6	I, ROBOT	\$6.5	2,806	\$2,322	-37	4	\$126.9
7	SPIDER-MAN 2	\$5.4	2,564	\$2,118	-37	6	\$354.5
8	HAROLD & KUMAR...	\$3.2	2,163	\$1,476	-42	2	\$12.3
9	CATWOMAN	\$2.9	2,275	\$1,275	-65	3	\$36.1
10	A CINDERELLA STORY	\$2.9	2,065	\$1,394	-41	4	\$46.9
11	FAHRENHEIT 9/11	\$1.9	1,009	\$1,895	-39	7	\$113.3
12	THE NOTEBOOK	\$1.9	1,255	\$1,487	-31	7	\$72.2
13	NAPOLEON DYNAMITE	\$1.7	546	\$3,186	+24	9	\$12.5
14	ANCHORMAN	\$1.6	1,370	\$1,154	-50	5	\$81.8
15	THUNDERBIRDS	\$1.3	2,062	\$610	-55	2	\$5.6
16	OPEN WATER	\$1.1	47	\$23,424	—	1	\$1.1
17	DE-LOVELY	\$0.9	410	\$2,225	-23	6	\$8.6
18	SHREK 2	\$0.9	812	\$1,101	-32	12	\$434.4
19	HARRY POTTER...	\$0.7	409	\$1,781	-26	10	\$245.3
20	KING ARTHUR	\$0.6	480	\$1,331	-56	5	\$50.2

SOURCE: NIELSEN EDI. WEEKEND OF AUGUST 6-8. *WEEKEND-GROSS AND GROSS-TO-DATE FIGURES IN MILLIONS. INCLUDES SOME MULTISCREEN THEATERS AND PRINTS SHIPPED AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL SITES.

THE CHART COURSE Lessons From the Box Office

NOT-SO-PRIVATE 'DANCERS' A few indies usually sneak around the Hollywood blockbusters to become summer hits, but this year a large bumper crop—nearly all 2004 Sundance vets—has emerged. Last week's success of *Open Water* followed strong showings by *Maria Full of Grace* (\$1.8 mil to date) and *Garden State* (\$935,270), while docs *Super Size Me* (\$11.1 mil), *Control Room* (\$2.1 mil), *Riding Giants* (\$1.2 mil), and *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (\$964,464) have drawn big crowds. But the champ so far is *Napoleon Dynamite*, which has exploded to \$12.5 mil—some 30 times its tiny budget.



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DVD & Video

His Name Is Prince

And he is funky. Two pics hit sour notes, but Warner's DVDs prove that *Purple* still reigns. by Dalton Ross

PURPLE RAIN

20th Anniversary
R, 111 mins., 1984

GRAFFITI BRIDGE

PG-13, 91 mins., 1990

UNDER THE CHERRY MOON

PG-13, 100 mins., 1986

Dearlly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called Prince—a man with three feature films being released on DVD. The most notable, of course, is a new two-disc special edition of *Purple Rain*, showcasing the performer at the height of his creative and commercial success. The story may be somewhat threadbare (yet still fresh enough for Eminem to rip off liberally in *8 Mile*), and the makeup and wardrobe selections a bit on the ridiculous side (what's with all the ruffles?), but the performances are nothing short of magical. (C'mon, tell me you

don't get all choked up at the end of "The Beautiful Ones.") And Morris Day provides the perfect comedic foil for The Kid. As far as the extras go, they're as good as one could expect without the direct involvement of His Purpleness: Revolution band members share memories, Eddie Murphy struts around half naked at the 1984 MTV premiere party, and we learn from director Albert Magnoli that "When Doves Cry" was actually a last-minute addition to the film. (Hey, nice save, Magnoli!)

But if Prince never meant to cause us any sorrow and never meant to cause us any pain, why the hell did he dare direct the horrendous sequel *Graffiti Bridge*? The Kid is still dueling with Day, but you'll be fighting back giggles at this embarrassing and incoherent production. Only slightly less egregious is Prince's foray into romantic slapstick,



If you know how to rock, say yeah!

Under the Cherry Moon, in which he woos Kristin Scott Thomas in the Mediterranean. Neither has any real extras besides some music videos, and you know what? That's just fine. *Rain*: **A-** *Bridge*: **D-** *Moon*: **C**

DOGVILLE

Nicole Kidman, Paul Bettany
R, 177 mins., 2003 (Lions Gate)

In this Podunk of pooches, dogs bark but nary a canine is seen. Actually, nothing's seen, except a town blueprint, where chalk out-



Caucasian chalk circle

lines form houses and stenciled street names constitute roads. Humanity is thrust to the forefront as Kidman's sweetie-with-a-secret hides from gangsters in a tiny mining village, enlivening its woeful citizens (who nevertheless exploit her) and wooing Bettany's aw-shucks intellectual. With John Hurt's fanciful narration, Lars von Trier's crude naturalism plays like experimental theater with bursts of fable. Think Wes Anderson adapting Theodore Dreiser. Initial inaccessibility gives way to a tragically pure vision of innocence twisted by the hidden hands of human cruelty. Just as *Dancer in the Dark*'s Busby Berkeley numbers evolve from schizo-flights to logical responses to savagery, *Dogville*'s environs ring true as hollow walls in a harrowing reality. **EXTRAS** Commentary by von Trier and cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle. **A**—Timothy Gunnatilaka



Chandelier earrings are back!

THE APPLE

Catherine Mary Stewart,
George Gilmour
PG, 86 mins., 1980 (MGM)

When Israeli bad genius Menahem Golan's futuristic schlock-rock/disco musical premiered at a Los Angeles movie palace in 1980, the studio handed out vinyl copies of the soundtrack before the curtain. Halfway through the film, which is horrible but *fascinating*, people started throwing them at the screen. Philistines! This adorable turkey, so delightfully oblivious to its own awfulness, is a rhinestone-studded song-and-dance extravaganza about a music company that wants to take over the world ("Hey, hey hey/BIM's all the way!") and the two fresh-faced folkies from Moose Jaw ("I think it's in Canada") whose love makes the most beautiful music of all. If there's any justice, 2003's breakout mid-

night movie will now become America's newest, greatest cult film sensation. **EXTRAS** Just an irresistible trailer. But as part of something called "Summer Movie Madness," MGM is releasing *The Apple* alongside a slew of other good bad movies, including the Cher vehicle *Chastity*, *Roller Boogie*, which stars an exorcised Linda Blair, and *Zachariah*, featuring *Eight Is Enough* dad Dick Van Patten as "the Dude." **A**—Gregory Kirschling

THE CINEMA SIRENS COLLECTION

Jayne Mansfield, Brigitte Bardot
Unrated, 70–109 mins. each,
1950–71 (Koch)

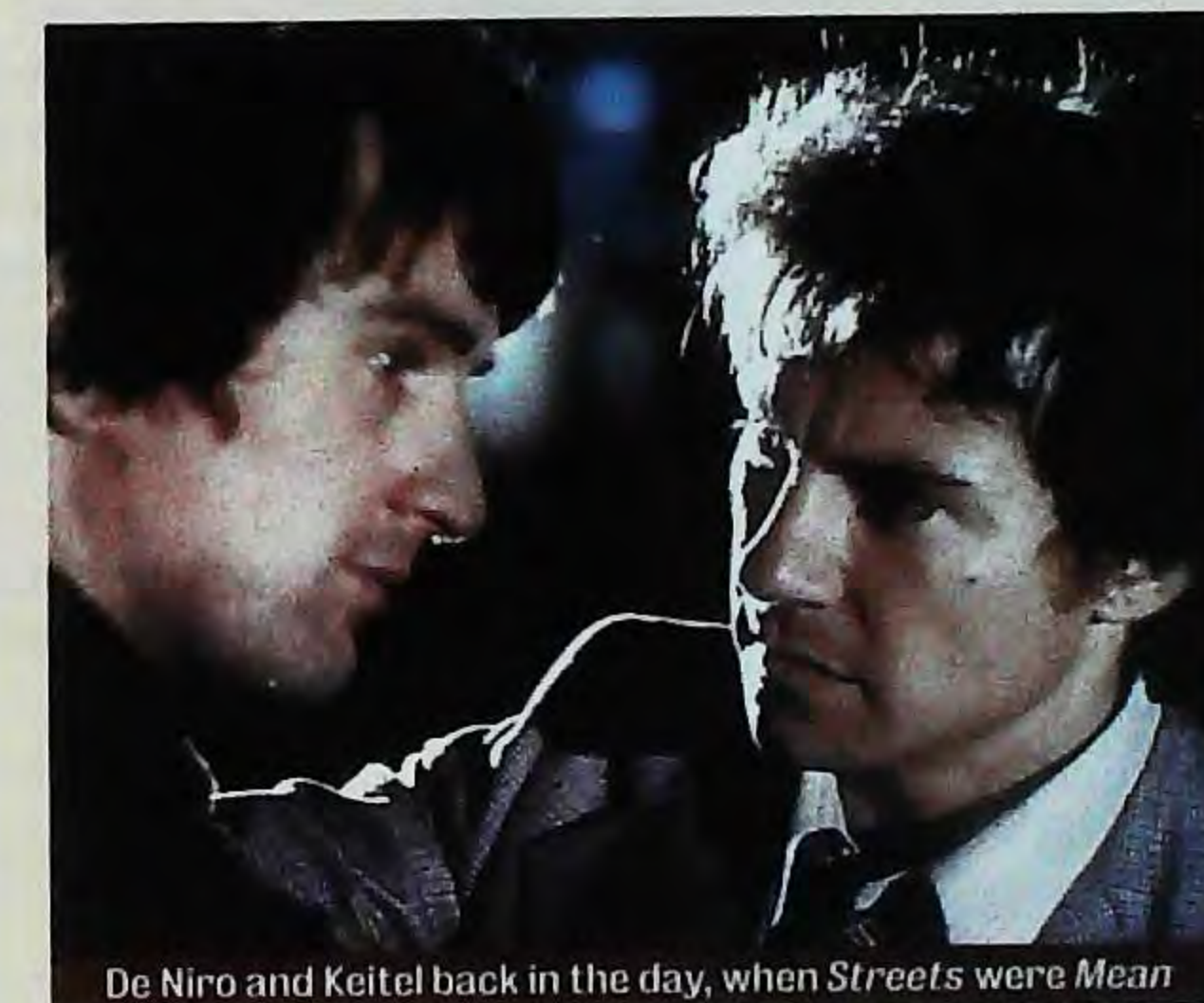
A multidisc release featuring such "sirens" as Mansfield, Bardot, Gina Lollobrigida, and Claudia Cardinale certainly sounds like a can't-miss concept. But what we have here is less a "collection" than a grab bag, full of titles that hardly show these bombshells at their best. Mansfield goes from a watered-down femme fatale in the creaky caper film *It Takes a Thief* to an outsize—in more ways than one—caricature of herself as a campy stripper in *Too Hot to Handle*. Lollobrigida is decidedly nonglam as a sensibly dressed small-time smuggler in the tepid potboiler *Alma*. And then there is Bardot, in the excruciatingly



Is this urgent? I'm very busy being *Too Hot* at the moment.

BOXED SET OF THE WEEK

'The Martin Scorsese Collection'



De Niro and Keitel back in the day, when *Streets* were *Mean*

In a freshly minted commentary track for *Mean Streets* (R, 110 mins., 1973), Scorsese says he based Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel's contentious relationship partly on Abbott and Costello. Then, for anyone upset with his crime-ridden portrayals, the director recommends positive takes on Italian-Americans like *Marty* and—who knew?—the Anne Bancroft-directed *Fatso*. But until the next Borgnine or DeLuise film festival, we'll have to make do with five Scorsese pics getting a special-edition treatment from Warner, not all of which involve made men. There's an unravelling woman at the center of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (PG, 112 mins., 1974), which may be the director's one bona fide chick flick but still boasts action-flick-worthy camera moves. Scorsese admits that *Alice*'s studio-mandated happy ending posed a problem—not unlike the obstacles to finding a non-defeatist wrap-up for *After Hours* (R, 96 mins., 1985), a too rare turn at black comedy. These ended up classics anyway, unlike his Cassavetes-indebted debut feature, *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* (R, 90 mins., 1968), a film Scorsese admits is best seen as a dry run at *Streets*, which more ably addressed Catholic and familial guilt. For most consumers, anyway, these will all be mere opening acts for a new double-disc treatment of *GoodFellas* (R, 145 mins., 1990), less remarkable for yet another mile-a-minute Scorsese monologue than for a separate "cop and crook commentary," wherein the real Henry Hill and his prosecutor enthuse over the verisimilitude of each whack job. By equal turns, Hill's brushes with death and Scorsese's viscera-fests will make you glad to be alive. *Mean Streets*, *Alice*, *After Hours*, *GoodFellas*: **A** *Who's That Knocking*: **B-**—Chris Willman



Tome of the Week

'ULTIMATE DVD'

DVDFILE.com editor in chief Peter M. Bracke gives the lowdown on *Tron*, *Dracula*, and 98 other collector musts, plus reviews of extras and interviews with directors—John Waters! McG!

ALI G:

So when you arrived on the moon, was the people who lived there friendly or was they scared of you?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

There was absolutely no thought of encountering any living being whatsoever.

ALI G:

Do you think man will ever walk on the sun?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

No. The sun is too hot. It is not a good place to go to.

ALI G:

What happens if they went in winter, when the sun is cold?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

The sun is not cold in the winter.

Ali G meets Buzz Aldrin.
Episode 4.
Da Ali G Show



DA COMPLETE
FIRST SEASON
Now available on DVD.



DVD Video

whimsical *The Bear and the Doll*, looking perfectly silly as a miniskirted playgirl swinging around '60s Paris. Only Cardinale, in *Girl With a Suitcase*, actually comes off well. As a struggling singer who gets involved with a teenage boy, she is gorgeously, earthily vibrant. In short, a true siren. *Suitcase*: **B-** *Too Hot, Thief, Alina*: **C** *Bear*: **D-** —Michael Sauter

HAPPY DAYS:

The Complete First Season
Ron Howard, Henry Winkler
Unrated, 6 hrs., 23 mins.,
1974 (Paramount)

LAVERNE & SHIRLEY:

The Complete First Season
Penny Marshall, Cindy Williams
Unrated, 6 hrs., 13 mins.,
1976 (Paramount)

Two surprisingly different '50s nostalgia shows. Cobbled together in response to *American Graffiti*'s success, *Happy Days* spent season 1 finding its legs. Characters were elided (Richie's brother Chuck) or embroidered (Fonzie goes from mute to gregarious, and from Members Only to black leather) as audience reaction dictated. Garry Marshall and his



Ron Howard (r.). Wonder what became of him...



...and what about that Penny Marshall (l.) girl?

snowballing TV juggernaut used the lessons learned to swap malteds for beer and spin off *Laverne & Shirley*, which hit the ground running. One wrinkle: Despite its spicier tone, *L&S* didn't tackle the social issues (race relations, nuclear war) that *Happy Days* did (albeit ham-handedly). Inexplicably, no **EXTRAS** on either DVD set. Releasing these shows—which are already sitting in our collective unconscious

(and in syndication)—without outtakes, commentary, audition footage, etc., leaves us with a frustratingly limited view of how two cultural icons looked before anyone even thought of jumping the shark. *Happy Days*: **B-** *L&S*: **B+** —Kirven Blount

SLIDERS:

The First and Second Seasons
Jerry O'Connell,
John Rhys-Davies
Unrated, 16 hrs., 59 mins.,
1995-96 (Universal)

It's doppelgängers aplenty when boy genius Quinn Mallory (O'Connell) discovers a wormhole that leads to parallel Earths and can't find his way back home. Joining the journey are physics professor Maximilian Arturo (Rhys-Davies), gal pal Wade Wells (Sabrina Lloyd), and inadvertent tagalong Rembrandt Brown (Cleavant Derricks). Anchored by the animated performances of Rhys-Davies and Lloyd, *Sliders*' best episodes are ones in which Russia wins the Cold War, or where '60s counter-culture is still groovy. **EXTRAS** In their pilot commentary, cocreators Tracy Tormé and Robert K. Weiss rip into studio suits for trying to dumb down the show's plot. And in a making-of doc, O'Connell reveals the secret of his success: "Science-fiction fans are like a beautiful woman... You gotta bring her flowers. You gotta treat her with respect." **B-** —Paul S. Katz



Glad to see he lost the *Stand By Me* weight

MAYOR OF THE SUNSET STRIP

Documentary
R, 91 mins., 2004 (First Look)

It's hard to imagine deejay Rodney Bingenheimer having the chops to be "the designated driver between the famous and the not-so-famous." With his skinny Mick Jagger legs, Sonny Bono bowl cut, and all-around awkward mannerisms, the '70s glam-rock darling-turned-L.A.'s KROQ kingfish provokes a true story that is, indeed, stranger than fiction. Bingenheimer managed not only to weasel his way onto the scene but also to be embraced by it. Old and new rockers alike (from David Bowie to Chris Martin) testify on behalf of his influence and longevity, but the doc is also a psychological study of what happens when the good times end. The answer? One shift on Sundays, midnight to 3 a.m. Long live rock & roll. **EXTRAS** Additional footage and commentary make Bingenheimer—someone who belongs behind the camera instead of in front of it—even more freakish. But pay attention, ladies: Davy Jones reveals that he's listed in the Pennsylvania phone book. **B+** —Nancy Sidewater

The Charts



HELLBOY

'HELL' HATH FURY

Studios often peg video releases to what's showing in multiplexes, so it's no wonder a recent surplus of associations—some direct, some not so—hit the charts. *Hellboy* debuted at No. 1 on both lists as a certain comic arachnid scales the box office. *Identity* exploded while its *Bourne*-again sequel blows

up theaters. Robert Greenwald's *Outfoxed* doc channeled *Fahrenheit*'s liberal fervor for 19th in sales. And *White Castle*'s stoners took a hit off *Force*'s own fast-food fun. Dude!

TOP 10 DVD SALES

	LAST WEEK		BOX OFFICE GROSS TO DATE*	WEEKS ON CHART	FW GRADE
1	—	HELLBOY	\$59.0	1	B+
2	1	STARSKY & HUTCH (WIDE)	\$88.2	2	B+
3	2	THE BOURNE IDENTITY—EXPLOSIVE EDITION	\$121.7	3	C+
4	3	CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE DRAMA QUEEN	\$29.3	2	B+
5	—	THE WHOLE TEN YARDS (WIDE)	\$16.3	1	C
6	5	THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT	\$57.8	4	C-
7	4	DIRTY DANCING: HAVANA NIGHTS	\$14.1	2	B
8	7	BAD SANTA—UNRATED (WIDE)	\$60.1	6	D
9	9	GOLD MOUNTAIN	\$95.6	5	A-
10	8	AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE: VOLUME TWO	—	2	—

TOP 10 TAPE RENTALS

	LAST WEEK		VIDEO GROSS TO DATE*	BOX OFFICE GROSS TO DATE*	WEEKS ON CHART	FW GRADE
1	—	HELLBOY	\$1.3	\$59.0	1	B+
2	1	STARSKY & HUTCH	\$2.9	\$88.2	2	B+
3	2	THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT	\$5.1	\$57.8	4	C-
4	—	THE WHOLE TEN YARDS	\$0.8	\$16.3	1	C
5	4	CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE DRAMA...	\$1.7	\$29.3	2	B+
6	3	GOLD MOUNTAIN	\$6.0	\$95.6	5	A-
7	5	SECRET WINDOW	\$6.5	\$47.8	6	B
8	6	50 FIRST DATES	\$8.9	\$120.8	7	C-
9	8	THE BIG BOUNCE	\$1.2	\$6.5	2	B+
10	7	MYSTIC RIVER	\$9.3	\$90.1	8	B

SOURCE: VIDEO BUSINESS/RENTAL FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 1, 2004; NIELSEN EDI *IN MILLIONS

NOW IN STORES

GOOD TIMES: THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON (Unrated, 10 hrs., 4 mins., 1975-76, Columbia TriStar) The '70s sitcom managed to weave topical issues like STDs, gun control, ghetto life, and finding Mr. Right into 24 zany, fun-filled episodes. Dy-no-mite!

KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI COLLECTION II: BLIND CHANCE; CAMERA BUFF; NO END; THE SCAR (Unrated, 114/103/103/102 mins., 1987/1979/1985/1976, Kino) Anchored by *Run Lola Run* precursor *Blind Chance*, the showcase of early films by the Polish master of *Decalogue* fame is finally available, with crew interviews and two never-before-seen Kieslowski short docs.

CONAN O'BRIEN 10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL: THE BEST OF TRIUMPH THE INSULT COMIC DOG (Unrated, 63/61 mins., 2004, Lions Gate) The jolly red-haired giant of late night celebrates a decade of self-deprecation with the likes of Tom Hanks, Will Ferrell, Jack Black, Andy Richter, and an excrementally inspired canine, whose own DVD also hits stores.

THE NICK AND JESSICA VARIETY HOUR (Unrated, 48 mins., 2004, Image) In their first variety special (among many more, hopefully), Mensa's own spokespersons proudly showcase those talents rarely seen on *Newlyweds*—like Jessica's comic stylings and Nick's singing! With an appearance by Mr. T!

*ORIGINAL THEATRICAL GRADE

WE'RE DYIN' FOR...

'Picket Fences'



The Picket tradition: Finkel, Ray Walston

Rome, Wisconsin, wasn't built in a day. It took four glorious seasons to construct and deconstruct the bizarre burg, home to mouthy legal eagle Douglas Wambaugh (Fyrvush Finkel), the Frog Man, the Serial Bather, and the strangely normal Brock

family. Eight years after being axed by CBS, David E. Kelley's Emmy-winning series deserves another outing, on DVD.

Kelley refused to whitewash *Fences* during his three-year tenure as exec producer, digging into controversial issues like racially motivated busing, euthanasia, and fetal-tissue transplants. (No sacred cows allowed, only cows injected with alien DNA.) Imagine the hot-button scenes that *didn't* make it on the air! Hopefully someone swept the footage off the cutting-room floor—combined with meaty commentary, that would be a fence worth mending.

Fox Home Entertainment, owner of the DVD rights, seems to agree: According to exec Steve Feldstein, the studio is mulling a 2005 release. —Alisa Cohen



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Television

Goodman and Roseanne were in a true blue state; (inset) O'Connor and Stapleton stood for family values

Family Politics

Having OD'd on election coverage, Ken Tucker seeks real social commentary—in classic sitcoms

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Monday–Sunday, midnight (TV Land)

ROSEANNE Thursday, 10 p.m. (Nick at Nite)

The sheer nowness of the Democratic and Republican conventions, combined with the meretricious banality of television news coverage of the political process, has been driving me to take respite in some old TV shows. Given the choice between, say, Dan Rather's natterings and Archie Bunker's rantings, I'll take the latter. Since everything takes on a partisan hue during an election year, it's struck me that in the polity of family sitcoms,

Roseanne, whose reruns I catch in syndication and on Nick at Nite, is a blue state, while *All in the Family*, currently airing on TV Land, is a red state.

I'll get to what I mean by that in a minute. First, what I've noticed in this time of *Oh, dear, the sitcom is dead!* bellyaching is how tremendously funny and impudent these shows were, how distinctive their visions of American life. *All in the Family* (1971–79) may have been producer Norman Lear's American transplantation of a British show, *Till Death Do Us Part*, but the series never felt borrowed. Lear—the very embodiment of Hollywood liberalism—set up the show to have



Carroll O'Connor's Archie inveigh against the progress made by blacks, women, and gays. A lesser actor would have made Archie an easily dismissable fool, but the late O'Connor played Archie with ferocity and insisted that you understand where Bunker was coming from. A working-class denizen who felt disenfranchised by late-'60s social reforms and alienated by the era's radical politics, Archie conflated tolerance with loose morals. Over the

years, the scripts and the success wore down O'Connor, and Archie, through sheer familiarity and exhausted plotlines, succumbed to cutesy lovability. But those first few seasons of rancorous arguments with son-in-law Mike "Meathead" (Rob Reiner) and Archie's appallingly cavalier treatment of his wife, Edith (Jean Stapleton, always the easiest to like and therefore the first to win an Emmy), remain gut-punch comedy.

Is there any doubt that Archie would now be a red-white-and-blue Bushie? With his unwavering patriotism, and his distrust of foreigners, Archie is Bush's kinda fella. The president appeals to the blue-collar laborers who feel betrayed by the Democrats' post-JFK pursuit of the upwardly upper middle class; the transplanted Texan speaks

Archie's working stiff's language—blunt, direct, and vehement.

By contrast, *Roseanne*'s 1988–97 sitcom (discount the final season, which wandered into star-gone-wacko surrealism) presented us with exactly the sort of American clan to whom Democratic nominee John Kerry proclaimed, "Help is on the way!" If ever a family needed help—financial, emotional, psychological—it was the brood sired by Roseanne and Dan Conner

Brenda Alert of the Week

'NORTH SHORE'

Finally—a reason to watch the sudsless soap. Starting Sept. 20, Shannen Doherty enlivens the Fox series (think Heather Locklear on *Melrose Place*) as Alexandra, Brooke Burns' long-lost sister.



Television

(John Goodman). Working parents often sweating out two jobs at a time, the Conners were equal-opportunity exhausted. The sitcom *Roseanne*, like the real-life Roseanne (whom the media so often misread during her heyday by labeling her merely coarse and rude) received the message of feminism in her heart, soul, and mind. The huge differences between these two sitcoms began with the fact that the real Roseanne, not a producer, conceived her series, and that the fictional Roseanne, unlike Edith, demanded equal responsibility, love, money, and rest from her husband.

I just watched an amazing episode from *Roseanne*'s second season, with writing credited to a pre-*Buffy* Joss Whedon. In it, a heartbreakingly young Sara Gilbert, wearing a red-and-black plaid hunter's cap as the Conners' wary middle daughter, Darlene, was moping because she had a

school assignment to write a poem. Her mother said, "Poetry's kinda fun...you get to be creative and expressive." Darlene blasted back: "I don't wanna be expressive. I couldn't care less about poetry. I just wanna graduate high school so I can get on with my life so I can get a job and get out of this hellhole town!" Long pause. Roseanne: "But if you could be expressive, what would you say?" Later, in hopes of forging a mother-daughter bond by revealing something of herself, Roseanne gave Darlene her own battered notebook of high school poetry—a beautiful, risky gesture. Lordy, I love this show.

Toting them up, I think *Roseanne* produced more outstanding episodes than *All in the Family*, but both shows will help get you through this political season, as comfort viewing and thought provocation. *All in the Family*: **A-** *Roseanne*: **A**

ASK THE CRITIC Ken Tucker

Second Opinion



SOUTH PARK

3rd Rock From the Sun failed to impress me in its first run, but I've fallen in love with the show in syndication. Go figure! What TV show have you liked more as it has aged? —Steve Gano That's easy, Steve: *Coach*. Just kidding! Let's see—I admit it took the brilliant *South*

Park feature film for me to appreciate how good the TV series is. This year's parody of *The Passion of the Christ* only confirmed its ongoing excellence "as it has aged," in your words, even if its cartoon kids haven't. And it took my brother urging me to watch *The Addams Family*, now on TV Land, to realize what a wonderful comic team John Astin and Carolyn Jones were. I was too young (read: too snobby) to appreciate them the first time around.

SEND QUESTIONS TO ASKTHECRITIC@EW.COM, OR POST THEM ONLINE AT EW.COM/ASKTHECRITIC

A MOSE BY ANY OTHER NAME



City slicker Mose

The words *Amish* and *break-out star* don't normally go together, but that was before viewers met Mose. The *Amish in the City* housemate recently talked to EW about biblical allusions, his chest, and *rumspringa* gone wild. —Karyn L. Barr

Ever want to yell at your housemates, "Hey, it's Mose, not Moses!" Nah. Actually I've been called Moses forever. A lot of people also call me Mosie or Mo. And then there's some who call me names that I don't want to repeat. Parting with the chest hair.

Discuss. I just wanted to get along with [the non-Amish kids] by whatever means it took. Turns out it took a lot more than a shaved chest to make them happy. Buggies are cool and all, but wouldn't you rather hop into a sweet ride, like a Camaro? Nah, traffic kills me. You can sit in it for an hour and go five miles. I could get out and walk faster. Please tell me how the beano stick works. Hmm...there are only a few chosen people who get to know how to do the beano stick. I'm keeping it that way.

Sound Bites



"I believe that a marriage won't last if the first time you saw your wife in lingerie, you had to pay a cover charge." BILL ENGVALL ON *BLUE COLLAR TV*

"At a military hearing on Wednesday, an Abu Ghraib intelligence officer disputed Private Lynndie England's claim that she was ordered to use humiliating tactics against Iraqi prisoners. However, the officer agreed with Private England's claim that the stylist who gave her that haircut was a master humiliation tactician." DENNIS MILLER ON CNBC'S *DENNIS MILLER*

"I'm half the man I was when we started." NICK LACHEY'S BROTHER DREW, REFERRING TO HIS MANHOOD WHILE WHITE-WATER RAFTING IN A REALLY COLD RIVER, ON *NEWLYWEDS*



"Jase is about as erotic as a wet T-shirt contest at a nursing home." WILL, DISSING HIS HOUSEMATE, ON *BIG BROTHER 5*

What's it take to become the next Apprentice?



Just Watch.

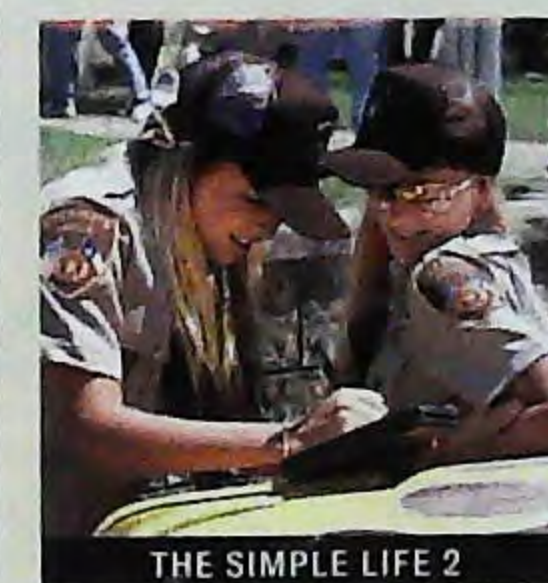
All New Season Starts September 9 NBC Thursdays



Get an exclusive in-depth reveal of the new season

• Behind-the-scenes tour of The Suite • Trump's rules to live by in the business jungle • Career advice from George and Carolyn *The Apprentice* now on DVD

The Ratings



THE SIMPLE LIFE 2

'LIFE' IS BEAUTIFUL Au revoir, Paris! Almost ten million voyeurs watched *The Simple Life 2*'s sexy scions drive off into the sunset (13th, 10th), making Fox's reality comedy the most popular show with Wednesday's 18-49 crowd. The series debut of UPN's *The Player* (108th) wasn't all that,

finishing last on Tuesday with a dismal 2 million haters. Also lacking game was The WB's *Studio 7* (114th), whose spiraling numbers have put the snoozefest's future in question. Speaking of questionable futures, Marty's wedding proposal to Stacy on Monday's finale of NBC's *Who Wants to Marry My Dad?* (20th) nabbed above-average ratings, with 7.8 million viewers.

TOP 25

	VIEWERS*		LAST WEEK
1	14.1	CSI (R) CBS, Thursday, 9 p.m.	1
2	12.8	TWO AND A HALF MEN (R) CBS, Monday, 9:31 p.m.	—
3	12.5	CSI: MIAMI (R) CBS, Monday, 10 p.m.	2
4	12.1	EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND (R) CBS, Monday, 9 p.m.	9
5	11.3	WITHOUT A TRACE (R) CBS, Thursday, 10:01 p.m.	—
6	10.6	THE AMAZING RACE 5 CBS, Tuesday, 10 p.m.	6
7	10.3	LAW & ORDER: SVU (R) NBC, Tuesday, 10 p.m.	13
	10.3	60 MINUTES (R) CBS, Sunday, 7 p.m.	3
9	10.1	GOLD CASE (R) CBS, Sunday, 8 p.m.	4
10	9.9	THE SIMPLE LIFE 2 Fox, Wednesday, 9:30 p.m.	—
11	9.5	BIG BROTHER 5 CBS, Thursday, 8 p.m.	12
12	9.4	LAW & ORDER: CRIMINAL INTENT (R) NBC, Sunday, 9 p.m.	14
13	9.2	THE SIMPLE LIFE 2 Fox, Wednesday, 9 p.m.	19
14	9.0	BIG BROTHER 5 CBS, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	11
15	8.8	MOVIE: PERSONALLY YOURS (R) CBS, Sunday, 9 p.m.	5
16	8.5	CROSSING JORDAN (R) NBC, Sunday, 10 p.m.	22
17	8.4	60 MINUTES II (R) CBS, Wednesday, 8 p.m.	18
18	8.0	48 HOURS MYSTERY (R) CBS, Wednesday, 10 p.m.	—
	8.0	NAVY NCIS (R) CBS, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	14
20	7.8	PRIMETIME THURSDAY ABC, Thursday, 10 p.m.	—
	7.8	TRADING SPOUSES: MEET... Fox, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	8
	7.8	WHO WANTS TO MARRY MY DAD? NBC, Monday, 10 p.m.	—
	7.8	STILL STANDING (R) CBS, Monday, 8 p.m.	—
24	7.7	LAW & ORDER (R) NBC, Wednesday, 10 p.m.	—
	7.7	YES, DEAR (R) CBS, Monday, 8:30 p.m.	—

NETWORK RANKINGS

	VIEWERS*		LAST WEEK
1	8.6	CBS	1
2	6.5	NBC	2
3	5.3	ABC	3
4	5.0	FOX	4
5	2.9	UPN	5
6	2.3	THE WB	6

* IN MILLIONS ** AVERAGE IN MILLIONS WEEK OF AUGUST 3-9, 2004

SOURCE: NIELSEN MEDIA RESEARCH

What to Watch

A day-to-day guide to notable programs.* BY ALYNDA WHEAT

MONDAY AUGUST 16

SERIES DEBUT 10:30-11AM

LazyTown (Nick Jr., TV-Y) It's a show for exercise-happy kids. They're literally programming our children to be healthier! Okay, technically I don't have kids. But this is America! Nobody tells my imaginary progeny how to live!

11-NOON

SOAPnet Reveals ABC Soap Secrets (ABC, TV-14-L) Ooh! I have a question: Where do they store Erica Kane's original body?

8-9PM

Fatal Fathers (A&E) Apparently, the gravest danger to pregnant women is the father of their babies. Kinda puts that no-sushi rule in perspective.

9-10:30PM

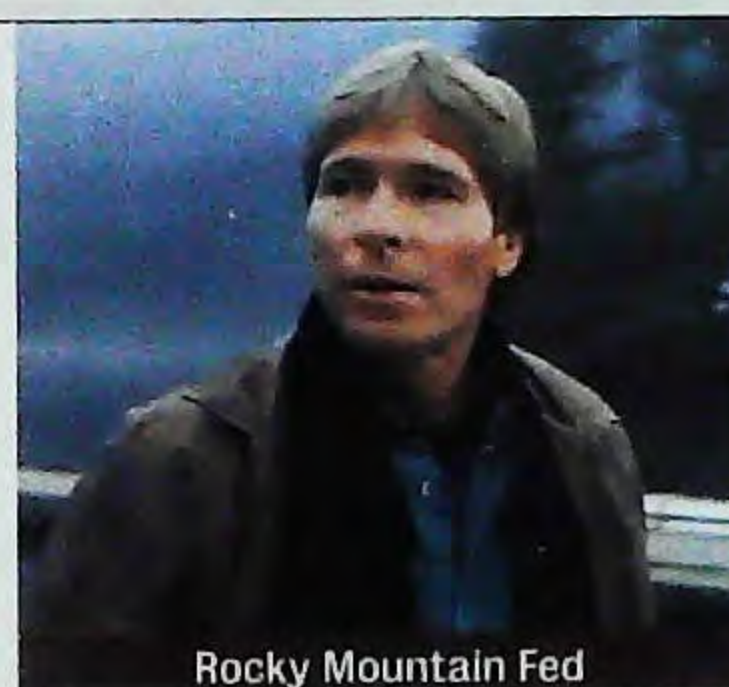
The President Versus David Hicks (Sundance Channel, TV-14) Australian jailed in Gitmo. We're afraid of Australians now?

9:30-10PM

Girlfriends (UPN, TV-PG-L) It's Valentine's Day again! Which means I'm drunk, bitter, and alone, pretending like *that's* not some kind of vicious cycle. (R)

8-9PM

The Best TV Shows That Never Were (ABC, TV-PG) You couldn't pay me to watch ABC crap like *According to Jim* (wait a minute, they do pay me to watch that...or at least they used to), but John Denver (right) as a karate-chopping, guitar-strumming FBI agent? I'm in. So in. Denver's turn in *Higher Ground* is just one of the failed TV pilots that turn up in this fun and fast-paced special, which also includes Peter Boyle reincarnated as a talking bulldog in something called *Poochinski*. That's right, you heard me—*Poochinski*. **B+** —Dalton Ross



Rocky Mountain Fed

TUESDAY AUGUST 17

8-8:30PM

All of Us (UPN, TV-PG-DLS) Robert and Tia think Bobby Jr. saw them having sex. Are they worried the kid'll have a complex? No. They're afraid he has evidence. Friggin' Internet. It's turned us all into suspects. (R)

8-9PM

Trading Spouses: Meet Your New Mommy (Fox, TV-PG) The best I can say about this exercise in cross-pollinated humiliation is that with a white woman named Nakamura, you can't call it racist. Vaguely sexist and wildly classist, sure. But racist? Not so much.

9-10PM

Big Brother (CBS) Wonder Twin powers, activate!

10-11PM

The Amazing Race (CBS) Mirna, sweetie, that thing on Phil's finger is called a wedding ring. No matter how much you flip your hair, it ain't happenin'.

8-MIDNIGHT

Olympics Women's Gymnastics Final (NBC) Thanks to Kerri Strug's fractured ankle and perfect vault, this was one of the most dramatic events of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, securing the gold for the Mag Seven (as they were called). Four years later, the women's team left Sydney without a medal, so this year's crop of athletes are looking for a shot at redemption. National champion Courtney Kupets (left) just might be their saving grace. The 18-year-old from Bedford, Tex., missed out on a gold-medal win at the world championship last summer due to an injured Achilles' tendon. Which gives her even more reason to stick the landing tonight.



I want nachos. And a gold medal.



Mark Ruffalo

THE GUEST LIST

Look Who's On the Couch

DAVID LETTERMAN

Monday Matt Damon, musical guests the Hives (R) Tuesday Andy Dick (R) Wednesday Sharon Stone, musical guests Yeah Yeah Yeahs (R) Thursday David Spade, musical guests Loretta Lynn and Jack White (R) Friday Sean Hayes, musical guests Phish (R)

JIMMY KIMMEL

Monday Musical guests Incubus Tuesday Seth Green Thursday Matthew Lillard, Blanchard Ryan (*Open Water*)

CRAIG KILBORN

Monday Mark Ruffalo Tuesday Brett Butler, Rory Culkin Thursday Dax Shepard Friday Mase

VOTE.

It's UP TO YOU!

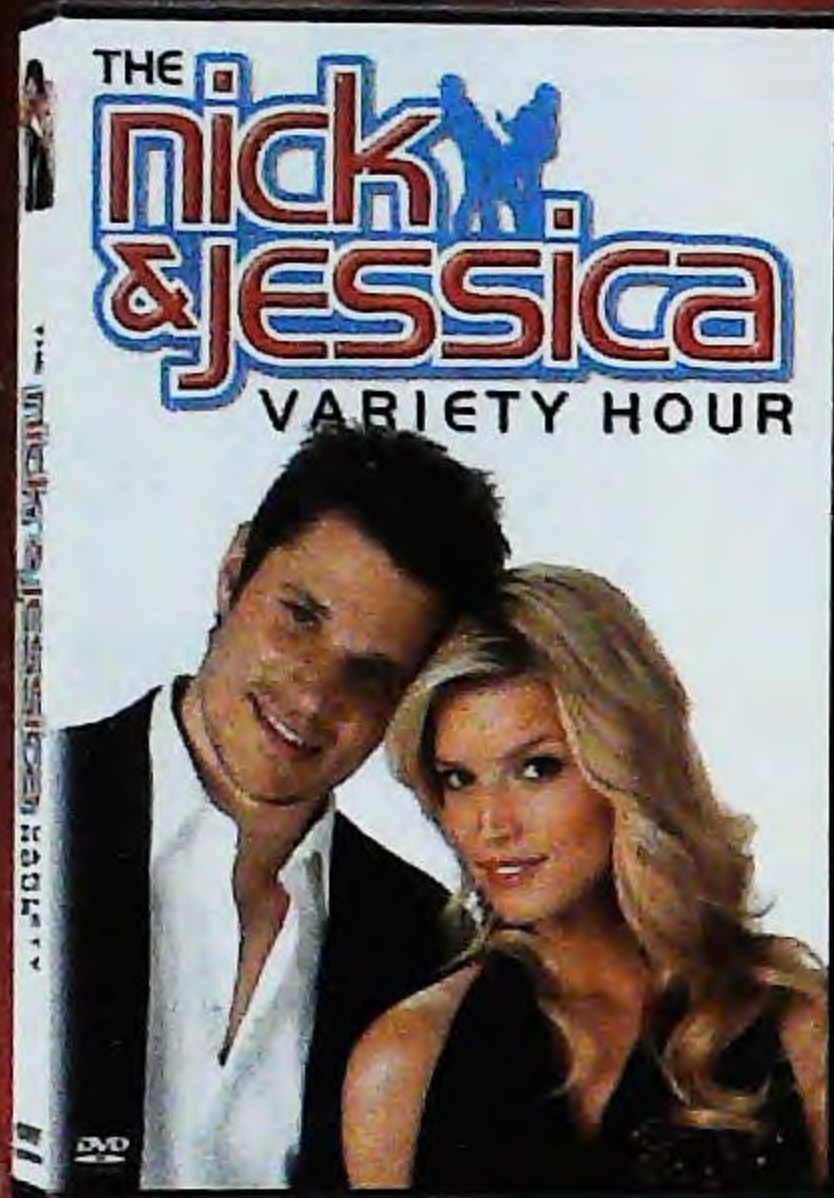
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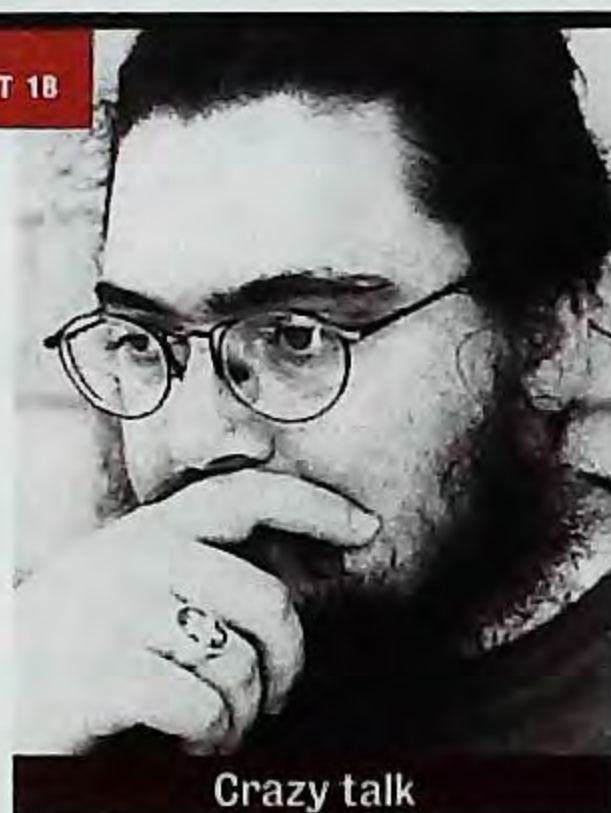
Television

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 18

7-8:30PM

People Say I'm Crazy

(Cinemax, TV-PG) Not every schizophrenic has John Cadigan's good fortune: After a psychotic breakdown in college, this California artist found himself supported by a loving family including filmmaker sister Katie, who helped him make this heartfelt documentary. Through interviews with Cadigan, his relatives, and fellow sufferers, *Crazy* doesn't let us into Cadigan's mind so much as turn his mind into art. **B** —Whitney Pastorek



Crazy talk

8-9PM

Amish in the City (UPN) Online interview with Ariel, the passive-aggressive vegan fascist: "I would go to festivals and see people hanging from hooks, naked." Sounds like an issue with Mom and Dad, not milk.

10-11PM

Living in TV Land: Dick Van Patten (TV Land, TV-PG) *Eight Is Enough* dad heads to the track with Jack Klugman and plays poker with Isaac from *The Love Boat*. I know! Awesome and lame all at the same time!

THURSDAY AUGUST 19

SYNDICATED*

Ricki Lake Ricki welcomes "Foxy Private Investigators." One of them had better be A.J. Simon.

*check local listings

8-10PM

Word Wars (Discovery Times Channel, TV-14) Documentary about searily hardcore Scrabble players who play for glory and gold. *Yeah, punk! I threw down qindar! Triple word score, bee-yotch! What? You go'n cry?! I know you want to!*

9-9:30PM

Trailer Park Boys

(BBC America, TV-MA) This cult hit about an indigent breed of Canuck trailer trash kicks off its second season with just-released jailbirds Jullan and Ricky returning to their soiled Sunnyvale Trailer Park and hatching a get-rich scheme to sell dope to prisoners. Sounds funny, eh? Okay, maybe not, but comic relief comes courtesy of characters like Bubbles, a shopping-cart enthusiast with thick specs, and J-Roc, the resident Eminem clone with a hysterical scratch-happy speech pattern. Worth ch-ch-checking out. **B-** —Raymond Fiole



Season premiere

FRIDAY AUGUST 20

7-7:30PM

Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends

(Cartoon Network, TV-Y7) Craig McCracken, creator of *The Powerpuff Girls*, has come up with another charmer for boys and girls, the tale of 8-year-old Mac, whose imaginary friend, Bloo, is sent to live at the title establishment. The home is filled with wildly surrealistic projections of kids' ids (art students: McCracken knows his Jean Arp and his Yves Tanguy). The result is endearing (Mac's bond to Bloo is touching), silly, and wildly inventive. **A-** —Ken Tucker



Series debut

NERD ALERT!

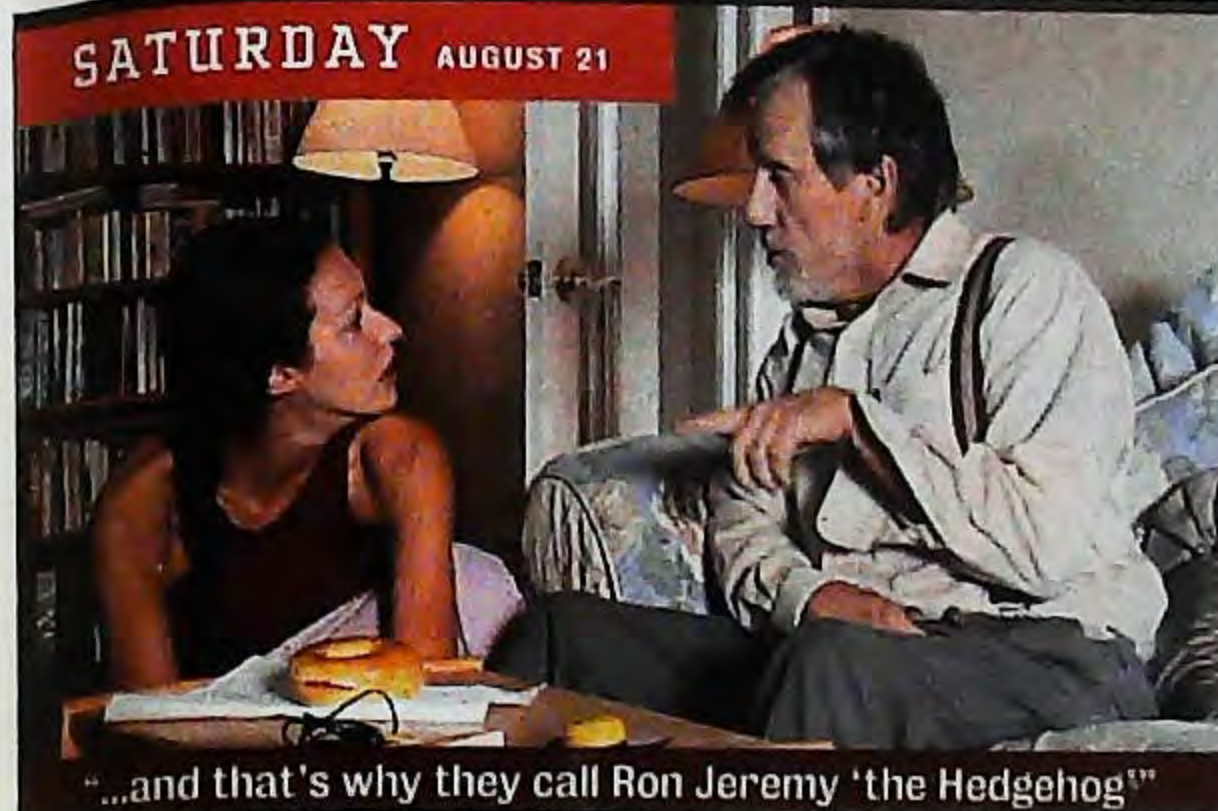
8-9PM

Enterprise (UPN, TV-PG) *Family Guy* creator Seth MacFarlane exercises his authority as king of the geeks and guest-stars as Engineering Crewman. Translation for non-dweebs: that's like Oprah dropping by Montel's show. (R)

9-10PM

CMT Greatest Myths: Rumors, Legends and Downright Lies (CMT, TV-PG) The lies tend to start with "No, darlin', I'm not married," and end with "Of course I'm on the pill."

SATURDAY AUGUST 21



9-11PM

This Girl's Life (Showtime, TV-R-VSLD) Why does a girl join the porn industry? Good pay? Decent hours? The 401(k) plan? According to Moon (Juliet Marquis, in a brave performance), a star in the adult-film business, the answer is simple: "Find what you love to do in life and make that your life's work." That matter-of-fact attitude permeates all of Moon's decisions, from navigating romance to mulling a career change to caring for her father (a scene-chewing James Woods, above with Marquis), who suffers from Parkinson's disease. While *Life* has soft-core sex and full monty shots of both men and women, the steam never rises since this is a "serious" movie about smut. But give the film respect for its vérité quality: It looks and feels like real porn—all action, no soul. **C** —Paul S. Katz

SUNDAY AUGUST 22

SEASON PREMIERE

8-9PM

Faking It (BBC America, TV-PG) Woody transforms from bicycle courier into polo player. Woody don't need polo, Woody needs a role model. Woody needs Quicksilver!

10-11PM

Insomniac With Dave Attell: Sloshed in Translation (Comedy Central, TV-14) Dave visits Japan's Wooden Penis Festival then nibbles on poisonous blowfish. I'll stop before they silence me.

10:30-11PM

Da Ali G Show (HBO, TV-MA) Aliight, checkit. So how izzit dat dis bruvva still gets well legit guvment officialists to talk mad proper on his show when everyone know he iz frontin'? Respek, tho'.

8-11PM

Sunday Night Football (ESPN) N.Y. Jets at Indianapolis. How long until the Super Bowl? Sorry, I'm just in it for the party.

9-10PM

America's Most Wanted (Fox) Tracking the killers of a Russian couple who were found one piece at a time. Horrifying, even if you like puzzles.

9-10PM

Inside the Criminal Mind (Discovery Health, TV-PG-V) If someone could explain why a psycho would dole out body parts, that'd be helpful.

LORENZO LAMAS ALERT!

9-11PM

Raptor Island (Sci Fi Channel, TV-14-LV) He went to hunt terrorists. Instead, he found... dinosaurs! And Steven Bauer! If only they could remember where they put their careers.



I'm grrreat!

7-8PM

Tigers of the Emerald Forest (Animal Planet) One needn't be a cat person to enter tiger territory—especially when Dr. Raghu Chundawat is the guide. Chundawat's narrative of tigers in Panna, India, is a virtual War of the Roses with its clashing dynasties, endangered heirs, and combative challengers to the throne. Two male tigers control Panna, sharing females and keeping a fragile truce that lets Chundawat observe the tiger life cycle from mating to cubs to the death of one of his favorite cats. Stunningly filmed and inherently dramatic, *Tigers* never fails to fascinate. **A-**

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The Best of Bowie from 1969-1976
an audio history of his early career.

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Television

MONDAY AUGUST 23

4-6:30PM
There's Something About Mary (FX, TV-14-DLSV)
And I think it's in her hair.

9-10PM
The Casino (Fox, TV-14)
Why does this show feel phonier than NBC's scripted *Las Vegas*? Was it the drag queen dinner party? The card

counters from M.I.T.? Or could it have been the swingers looking for bait on camera? Yeah, it's gotta be the swingers.

10-11PM
Without a Trace (CBS, TV-PG-LV) Little-known benefit of reruns: dramatic irony. Jack's wife is going to Chicago, but he doesn't know she's leaving him. Kinda makes you feel superior. Thanks, CBS! (R)

TUESDAY AUGUST 24



Actually, I'm a boxer man, myself

10-11:30PM*
Speedo (PBS, TV-PG-L) If you're expecting the offbeat tale of weekend warrior Ed "Speedo" Jager, a legend on the full-size bumper car circuit where the phrases *hillbilly huntin'* and *redneck wreckin'* are used motivationally, and the winner is the last one running—you'll get it. (And it's set to a soundtrack that includes "We Will Rock You" and "Love Hurts," natch.) But you'll also get the story of an unhappy husband who's slept on the sofa for a decade just to stay under the same roof as his sons. Of a man who finally meets a woman who supports his demolition-derby passion, and also seems to free him of the rage that breeds it. Of a small-time sports star who knows better than to smoke pot in front of young autograph seekers, but proudly tells them that he'll be celebrating his win at Hooters. Funny and sad, often at the same time, this documentary is a head-on hit. **A-**—Mandi Bierly *check local listings

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 25

8-9PM
Eye of the Beholder: Born to Ride (Travel Channel, TV-PG) Special on motorcycles and sex. That sounds uncomfortable. And dangerous.

10-11PM
Rescue Me (FX, TV-MA) At some point, the dead will have to accept that Denis Leary isn't really capable of helping them

sort stuff out. It's always more efficient to haunt children. They're givers.

10-11PM
AI Roker Investigates: Faulty Forensics (Court TV, TV-14) Roker delves into a DNA-testing scandal at a Houston crime lab, which may have led to improper convictions. And Katie's the one making all the money?

THURSDAY AUGUST 26

8-10PM
The Simple Life 2: Road Trip (Fox, TV-PG-DL) Paris and Nicole marathon. So begins the Night of Ultimate Torture. (R)

10-11PM
Back in the Hood: Gang War 2 (HBO, TV-MA) Documentary revisits the streets

with an ex-gang leader. If only there were something the gangs could do together in the spirit of love, peace, and balletic precision. Something like...

12:30-2AM
Olympics (NBC) ...synchronized swimming! All together now: *I know you! I know you! Hey, you! C'mon!* Lemme have my obscure SNL moment.

FRIDAY AUGUST 27



Season premiere

8:30-9:30PM
Radio Free Roscoe (The N, TV-G) Will and Douglas McRobb (*The Adventures of Pete & Pete*) must have liked being teens. How else to explain their sunny take on 9th grade? In their series' second-season opener, quirky Ray is given the "let's be friends" line by a date—and they actually follow through. Wait, is this science fiction? **B**—Michelle Kung

SATURDAY AUGUST 28

8-8:30PM
All Grown Up: Lucky 13 (Nickelodeon, TV-Y) A cool girl schedules her shindig the same day as Angelica's. Times like these call for an evil clown.

10-11PM
In Search of the Wandering Gopher (Fine Living Network) Duffers battle to host a new golf lifestyle show. If they'd

done that with *American Idol* we could have avoided this whole Dunklema situation.

11-11:30PM
The Venture Brothers (Cartoon Network, TV-14) The boys are brainwashed by the Orange County Liberation Front. When the revolution comes, the Chino kids go'n be the first ones with they backs against the wall.

SUNDAY AUGUST 29



No, I always look paranoid

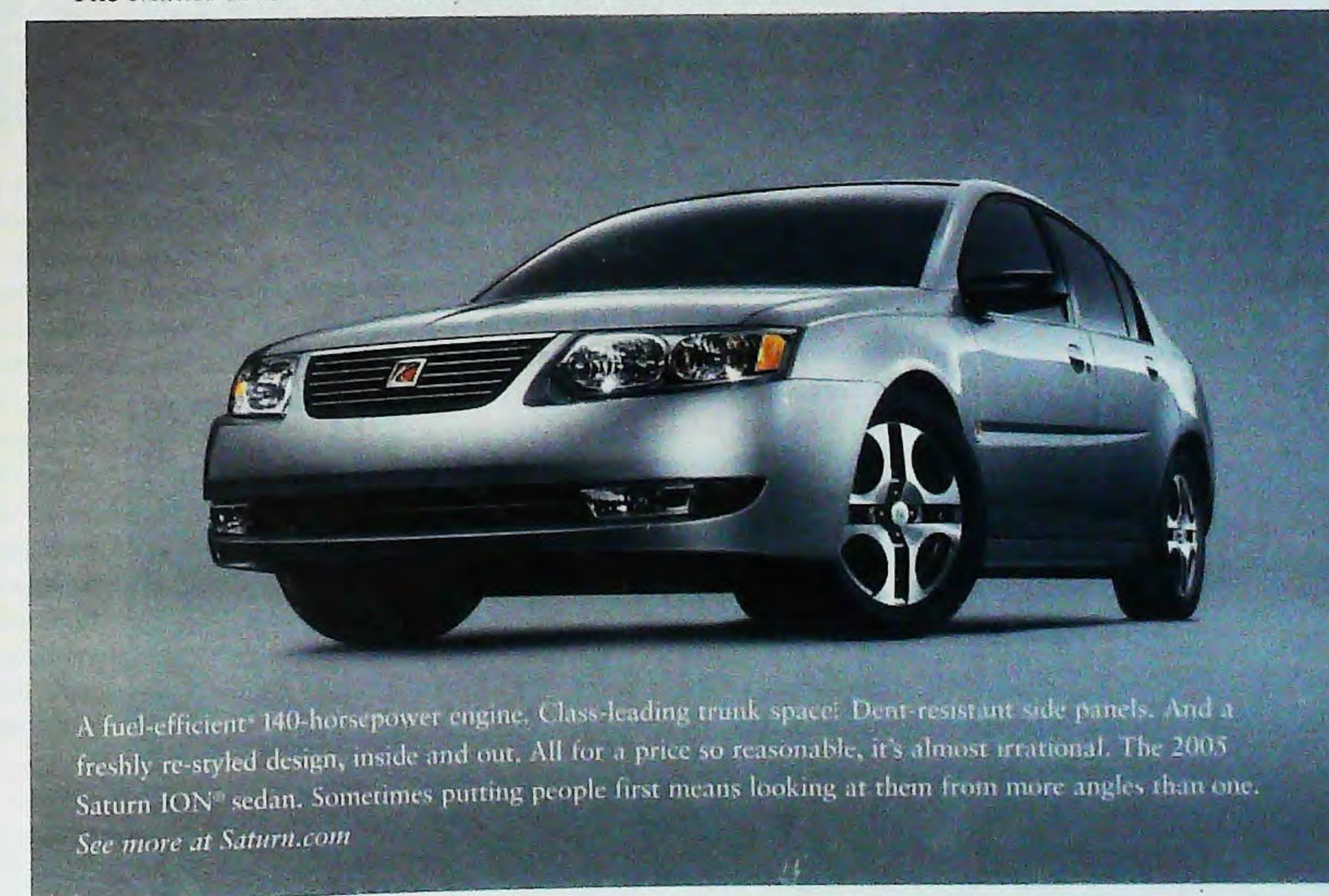
8-11PM
MTV Video Music Awards (MTV) J. Lo and Marc Anthony call it home. UPN's *The Player* wouldn't operate anywhere else. And Crockett and Tubbs knew it oh so well. It's Miami, and it's host to the most reliably bleepable

awards show on TV, the VMAs, which dropped New York as party central in favor of Florida's flavor. And that's not the only change. Gone is all that red-carpet madness; this year invitees will arrive in true Miami style—by yacht. And if you don't like the show, you can't blame the host, because there isn't one. Hopefully, comedian Dave Chappelle's (above) performance will still keep the natives restless. It'd be a shame if everybody suddenly behaved.

The Wildly Rational Woman



The Makes Sense On So Many Levels Saturn ION Sedan



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+Music

Divided He Stands

Is the beleaguered R. Kelly a happy guy—or a troubled soul? Even he can't decide. by David Browne

R. KELLY

Happy People/U Saved Me (Jive)

Three days after Bill Clinton summoned up his old Big Willie-style magic for his fellow Democrats at their Boston convention, an advance copy of R. Kelly's latest album, *Happy People/U Saved Me*, arrived in my office. The timing was purely coincidental—yet perfect. Here are two men impossibly skilled in the art of public performance; two men who are blatant pleasure seekers; two men both linked to tawdry affairs involving younger women; two men who see themselves as victims. And they're two men now in search of redemption—Clinton with his memoir, Kelly with his new music.

For someone facing further humiliation, if not serious jail time, Kelly has been astonishing-

ly prolific. His creative overflow continues with *Happy People/U Saved Me*, an intentionally provocative double CD divided into distinct halves. On the first disc, *Happy People*, Kelly makes like the life of several parties. "Hello, world, it's a great day/Be thankful, put a smile on your face," he announces right off the bat, in the supple groove of "Weatherman." The rest of the disc runs with that no-worries vibe. Starting with "Red Carpet," he hits the clubs prowling for love as breezy disco beats brighten up each track. In "Ladies' Night," he focuses on one particular woman on the dance floor, to whom he offers the world in the next song, "If." Then, when they're alone, he promises her "The Greatest Show on Earth," and he's not talking clowns and tigers. "What you are about to witness is unheard," he croons, one of many



Reminds us of Clinton

lines that make you wonder how nervous his lawyer grew when scanning the lyric sheet.

Given the allegations against him, *Happy People* feels either clueless or arrogant. Yet there's no denying that Kelly knows record making. The songs, all of which he wrote and produced, have a clean and fluid directness. He ramps up the Studio 54 feel in "Steppin' Into Heaven" (with what must surely be an

of an enduring disco hit, Kelly's love of old-fashioned song craft is something to admire.

On the companion album, *U Saved Me*, Kelly is a changed man: troubled, pained, seemingly paying the price for all the romancing he did on disc 1. Again, he sets the tone with the first song: in this case, "3-Way Phone Call," presented as a conversation between Kelly, his "sister" (sung by Kelly Price), and



Reminds us of Kelly

intentional reference to a "love train") and adds Philly soul strings to "If." But mostly, he knows the power of simplicity: no guest rappers and overly obvious samples here. While the tracks rarely hit the transcendent highs

a female friend. As he implores, among other things, "Do you really think I can rise up again?" the women reassure Kelly that all will be well as long as he keeps the faith.

More testimonial than song—

and often inadvertently amusing (we have to wait and wait as Price dials her friend's number; the phone rings and rings, and Kelly wonders whether she's home)—the song doesn't bode well for the rest of *U Saved Me*. Like Bill Clinton, Kelly dangles the promise of details and confessions that never arrive. Tracks like "Spirit" and "When I Think About You" are ersatz gospel hymns with generalized sentiments about seeing the light. When it comes to specifics, he's more likely to sing about other people's dilemmas: In the title track, he's a drunk-driving-accident victim redeemed when he lands a new job, and in "Prayer Changes," he takes on the roles of several hard-luck cases, including an abused woman and a faltering college basketball player.

Kelly probably wants all this to have the feel of an actual prayer session, complete with the inevitable gospel choirs that are meant to signify sincerity and nobility. But rather than building to a frenzied peak, as awe-inspiring services do, *U Saved Me* mopes along. The problem separating sinner and salvation seeker into two albums becomes apparent as *U Saved Me* gets bogged down in one indistinct, syrup-doused ballad after another: "The Diary of Me" tries to be another "I Believe I Can Fly" but never takes wing. As with our most recent ex-president, Kelly wishes to be forgiven for unspecified sins—he's simply an honest churchgoing guy who's given in to temptation, or so he disingenuously implies—but he's not nearly as entertaining or charming (not to mention self-deprecating and humorous) as Clinton has become while attempting the same trick. The next videotape Kelly should make is a copy of Clinton's Boston speech. *Happy People*: **B+** *U Saved Me*: **B-**

Pop/Rock

TIFT MERRITT

Tambourine (Lost Highway)



While Merritt's debut established her alt-country chops, this follow-up finds her hitting the Dusty trail...as in *Dusty in Memphis*' blue-eyed soul. Maybe "Al in Memphis" is even more apropos, given the mostly upbeat nature of a set that mixes rousing R&B horns with Heartbreaker Mike Campbell's understated guitar. Merritt's voice is a magical combination of cool reserve and effortless warmth; when she



Tift's latest Merritts a listen

serenades a "Good Hearted Man," you suspect he's getting a pretty grand ticker in return. **A-** —Chris Willman

JASON MRAZ

Tonight, Not Again—Live at the Eagles Ballroom (Elektra)



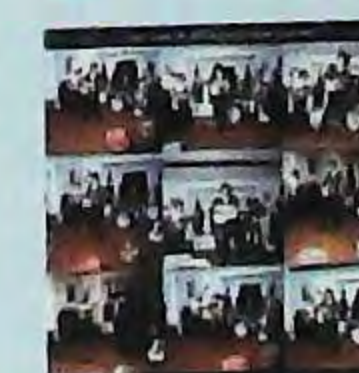
Time was, an artist had at least three studio albums out before releasing a live one. On his sophomore disc, Mraz is breaking the rules. And that's about as bold as it gets when he brings his impeccably performed yet busily bland PBS rock to a loudly appreciative Milwaukee crowd. The accompanying DVD adds playful interviews and backstage footage to the slickly shot concert. Still, you have to wonder about

THE LATEST IN...REISSUES



ELVIS COSTELLO, Goodbye Cruel World, Almost Blue, Kojak Variety (Rhino) Even Elvis dismissed 1984's *Goodbye Cruel World* as his "worst

record." So unless you spend evenings dissecting the bespectacled bard's heady couplets, don't bother with this expanded version of that slick pop flop or two of Costello's other failed experiments: 1981's *Almost Blue*, a flat country & western venture, and 1995's *Kojak Variety*, a haphazard covers disc. **Extras** In all three cases, the bonus CD of rarities is more interesting than the actual album. *Cruel World*: **C+** *Blue*: **C-** *Kojak*: **D**



TALKING HEADS, The Name of This Band Is Talking Heads (Rhino) Skip last year's too cleverly packaged boxed set and get this gem: a 1982

album featuring performances from '77 to '81 on CD for the first time. Recorded before the big suits, world beat forays, and slick art-funk of *Stop Making Sense*, this two-disc set captures the punk attitude, brittle R&B vamps, and quirky lyrical trips of their early years. **Extras** Fifteen cuts from the same era, including a particularly sweet 1981 Tokyo gig. **A**



THE VELVET UNDERGROUND, Live at Max's Kansas City (Atlantic/Rhino) This is historically important—Lou Reed's last

show with the band—though its artistic merits are debatable. Recorded on a cassette deck in 1970 (and released in '74), it suffers from sub-lo-fi sound, and the overall playing is less impressive than the superior 1969: *Velvet Underground Live Vol. 1 and 2*. **Extras** Seven cuts expand the release into two CDs, though some of those tracks are marred by crowd chatter. Yes, even the Velvets were ignored by drunken club goers. **B**



QUINCY JONES AND BILL COSBY, The Original Jam Sessions 1969 (Concord) These recently unearthed, never-released sessions were

recorded as soundtrack material for the '69-'71 sitcom *The Bill Cosby Show*. The Aquarius-age soul-jazz jams were produced by Quincy Jones and feature groove giants like Jimmy Smith and Ray Brown, yet they're surprisingly ho-hum. **Extras** A clever scratch-heavy remix of "Hikky-Burr" by Mix Master Mike. **B-** —Michael Endelman



Broadway-Bound Band of the Week

PINK FLOYD

Music exec Tommy Mottola, Miramax's Weinstein brothers, and Pink Floyd's Roger Waters are bringing the '70s rock opera *The Wall* to the Great White Way. When pigs fly, you say? Exactly!

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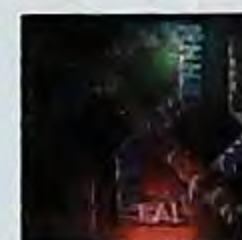
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+ Music

Mraz's professed road weariness when the most rockin' thing about him is his vintage Van Halen T-shirt. **C+** —Doug Brod

MOUSE ON MARS

Radical Connector (Thrill Jockey)

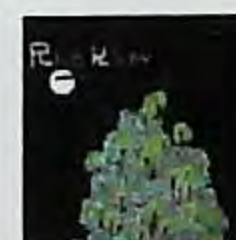


So there's Danger Mouse, Modest Mouse, and, of course, Mouse on Mars. What's up with the infestation of rodent-themed bands? Fortunately, the German electronica duo's eighth LP is worth more than a nibble. Sexy robot vocals slip and slide all over juicy squeals, raindrop plops, and jungle-thick beats, making MOM sound like the Basement Jaxx on Miracle-Gro. Better bring a Weedwacker to the dance floor. **B+** —Nancy Miller

RILO KILEY

More Adventurous (Brute/Beaute)

With a strong sense of ambition culled from sound-expanding side projects like the Postal



Service, the members of Rilo Kiley reconvene with their most sprawling CD yet. Supported by polished production that makes

2002's *The Execution of All Things* sound like an indie-rock field recording, singer Jenny Lewis displays a newfound confidence on "I Never," a lonesome R&B shuffle featuring doo-wop backup vocals. The plastic instrumentation of "Portions for Foxes" strips away the group's bittersweet charm, but on the whole, the quartet's *More Adventurous* approach was worth the risk. **B+** —Ryan Dombal

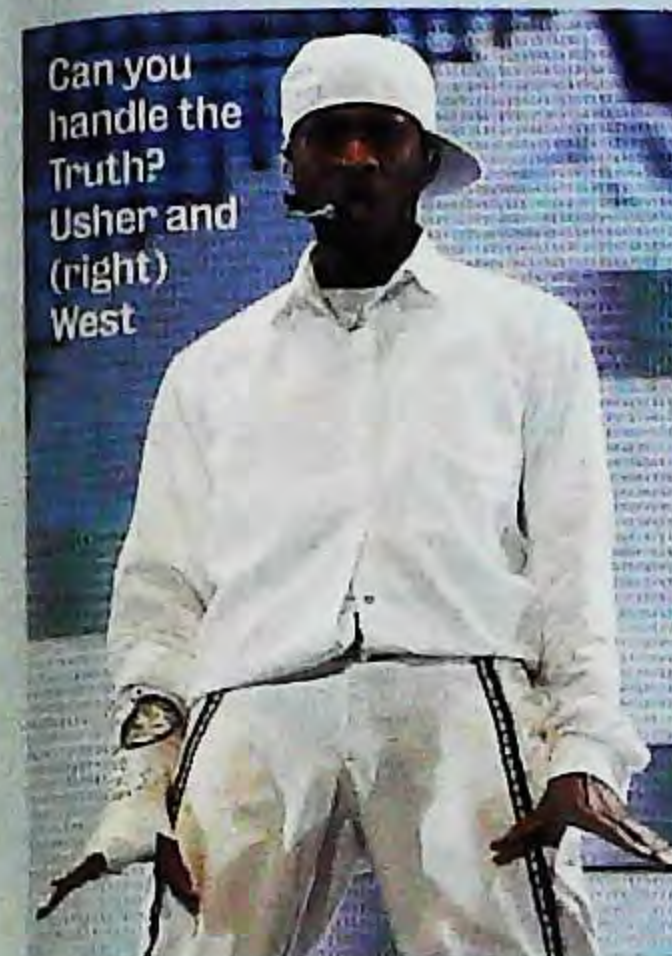
THE MOONEY SUZUKI

Alive & Amplified (Columbia)

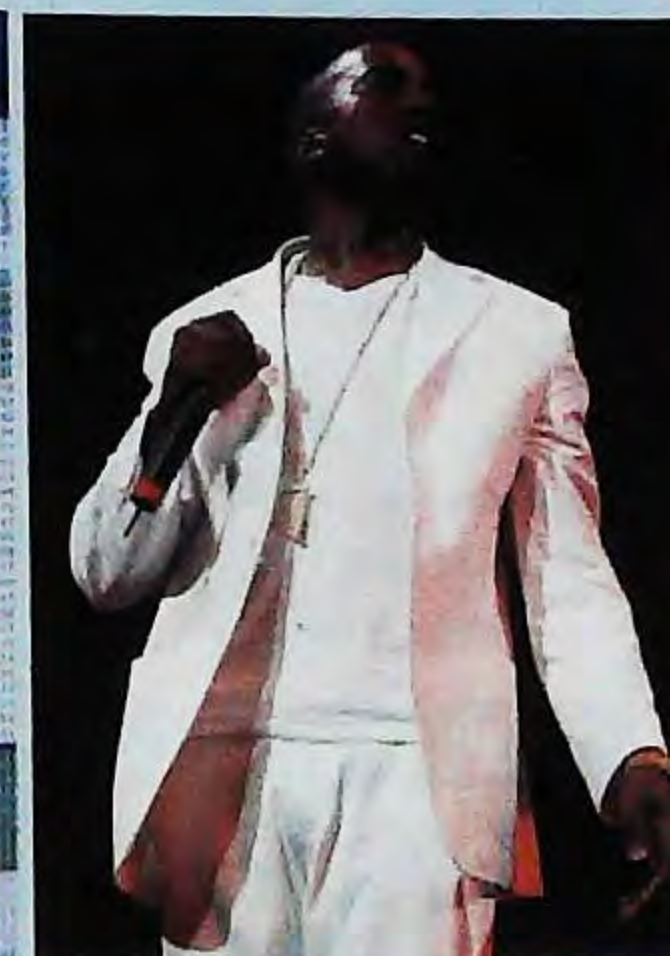


Following in Liz Phair's footsteps, these New York garage blockheads recruited the Matrix for their second CD, thus becoming the first band of their genre to officially sell out. The collaboration with pop's most ham-fisted producers has its moments: "Loose

TOUR REPORT: USHER AND KANYE WEST



Can you handle the Truth? Usher and (right) West



The glittering glove Usher wore on his arm as he rose through erupting pyrotechnics at Virginia's Hampton Coliseum on Aug. 5 was just one of many showbiz elements—from fashion to footwork—that the pop star's shoplifted from Michael Jackson over the years. But while Jacko seems to move on instinct, it's obvious from Usher's pristinely executed, modified moonwalk during "Caught Up" that he takes a much more calculated approach.

That's not to say that Usher's an awkward performer. For

that, look to Kanye West, who opened this first stop on the United States leg of Usher's Truth Tour. For more than half an hour, the rapper-producer bounced rigidly from the DJ on his far left to charismatic singer-keyboardist John Legend on his right without ever truly filling the space in between them. Any of Usher's eight elastic dancers could have provided more presence.

Still, West, who's made pompous guest appearances everywhere from *Def Poetry* to *Punk'd*, was uncharacteristically humble. Ego-less and buoyed by Legend's nerd-soul stylings, message songs like "All Falls Down" and "Jesus Walks" made up for West's inadequacies as they rang from the mouths of several thousand malleable youngsters. It was refreshing, considering these same kids would be watching a glistening, grinning Usher grind one of their wide-eyed own into a sofa within the hour.

In this and every physical maneuver—aside from the actual singing—Usher was so self-absorbed as to lend even a wobbly handstand the gravity of an orange alert. Gliding across the stage on hidden roller skates during a dynamic disco rendition of "U Don't Have to Call" was certainly wondrous, but Usher may have been better served by a pair of strong backup singers to bolster his exertion-weakened vocals. In fact, he might want to think about swapping one of his dancers for John Legend. That guy's no Michael Jackson, but he seems like a natural. **B-** —Neil Drumming

THE SONG YOU CAN'T ESCAPE

Daze of 'Our Lives'



Aaron Kamin and Alex Band have found their Calling

Life as We Know It (ABC) and *Clubhouse* (CBS). In fact, it was selected to be the latter show's theme and was also used in the Aug. 10 episode of The WB's *Summerland*. Why is "Our Lives" so omnipresent? Marketing, baby. Ron Broitman, VP of BMG Film and TV Music, loved its "uplifting, positive" message and decided to put some muscle behind it. "We got it to those creative people who are always looking for the right song," he says. But does the L.A. act worry about being pigeonholed, à la the Rembrandts, whose "I'll Be There for You"

They say TV is the new radio, and that's sho' nuff true in the case of the Calling's single "Our Lives." The anthemic song has been endlessly featured in sports programming and in on-air promos for two upcoming network TV programs,

forever made them "that group who did the *Friends* theme"? Calling singer Alex Band isn't sweating it: "Please. If *Clubhouse* does as well as everybody thinks it's gonna do, you won't hear me complaining." —Tom Sinclair

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+ Music

'n' Juicy" is a dumb-fun power-chord perfect for car stereos. Unfortunately, the Mooney's' concept of mass appeal also includes embarrassing homages to the glory of rock (and groupies) and a Bic-lighter ballad that's pure Hootie. **C+** —David Browne

R&B/Rap

MASE

Welcome Back
(Bad Boy/Universal)

SHYNE

Godfather Buried Alive
(Gangland)



Five years after abandoning the rap world to minister for God, Mase is back to his radio-ready shtick of mining recognizable melodies for his club cuts. By playfully recasting such oldies as the *Welcome Back*,

Kotter theme (the title track) and Madonna's "La Isla Bonita" (in "My Harlem Lullaby"), he proves he's better suited for the party than the pulpit. But the newly redeemed MC hasn't given up preaching completely, and righteousness is most un-Welcome. Mase's former Bad Boy labelmate Shyne, on the other hand, is in a much more ominous mind state. Currently serving a 10-year sentence from a 1999 felony shooting charge, Shyne recorded *Godfather* in the months leading up to his incarceration—though the disc's highlight, the seething "For the Record," sounds like it was captured via phone from his cell-block: "This jail only made me much more ruthless," he spits. Shyne's Tupac-esque reflections on honor and mortality are penetrating, and suggest there are greater meditations yet to be unleashed. *Welcome*: **B-** *Godfather*: **B+** —Raymond Fiore

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The Chart



LARGE SIMPSON

No news was good news for Ashlee Simpson in a week that saw not one new release enter the top 15. Selling 285,000 CDs, Jessica's kid sis recaptured the chart position previously held by the 16th installment of the *NOW* series, which strutted onto

last week's chart moving a cool half million (and, with 278,000 more units sold, it didn't do too shabbily this time out either). Meanwhile, no doubt helped out by their current single, "She Will Be Loved," soul slicksters Maroon 5 bounced up seven positions to No. 10—not a bad place to be marooned.

POP ALBUMS

	LAST WEEK		WEEKS ON CHART
1	2	ASHLEE SIMPSON <i>Autobiography</i> , Geffen	3
2	1	VARIOUS ARTISTS <i>NOW That's What I Call...16</i> , UME	2
3	4	JIMMY BUFFETT <i>License to Chill</i> , RCA Nashville/Mailboat	4
4	5	USHER <i>Confessions</i> , LaFace/Zomba	20
5	6	GRETCHEN WILSON <i>Here for the Party</i> , Epic Nashville	13
6	11	AVRIL LAVIGNE <i>Under My Skin</i> , Arista/RCA	11
7	15	PRINCE <i>Musicology</i> , NPG/Columbia	16
8	10	BIG & RICH <i>Horse of a Different Color</i> , Warner Bros. Nashville	14
9	12	LOS LONELY BOYS <i>Los Lonely Boys</i> , Or/Epic	24
10	17	MAROON 5 <i>Songs About Jane, J</i>	65
11	9	LLOYD BANKS <i>The Hunger for More</i> , G-Unit/Interscope	6
12	3	TAKING BACK SUNDAY <i>Where You Want to Be</i> , Victory	2
13	8	KEVIN LYTTLE <i>Kevin Lyttle</i> , Atlantic	2
14	7	TERROR SQUAD <i>True Story</i> , SRC/Universal	2
15	13	VAN HALEN <i>The Best of Both Worlds</i> , Warner Bros.	3

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AIN'T THAT PECULIAR? A look beyond the top 15 albums

WHERE'S THE REST OF ME? *Legless* is the word for a host of big debuts that find the top 15 a distant memory. The chart-topping Beastie Boys were at a beastly No. 35 in their seventh week. Brandy hasn't aged like fine wine: Her latest started out at No. 3 but fell to No. 60 in week 5. It took only five weeks for the Cure to sink from No. 7 to No. 73. New Found Glory, who bowed at No. 3, are now Old Glory 11 weeks later, having dropped to No. 86.

HONKY TANKIN' Jimmy Buffett scored his first No. 1 album on the *Billboard* 200 by brazenly targeting the country market (he created the perfect setup via last year's smash duet with Alan Jackson). But hooking up with a hat act doesn't always work. Despite his own No. 1 country duet, with Kenny Chesney, Uncle Kracker didn't find many Pollys who wanted his country-oriented *72 and Sunny*; by week 5 it was down to No. 139, having sold just 80,000 units.

DIE ANOTHER DAY Three weeks and more than 135,000 copies later, the reissued *Ready to Die* still tops the catalog chart. We're guessing P. Diddy hopes this new version of the Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 debut (with two additional cuts and a DVD) will ready fans for the Biggie "duets" CD he'll drop later this year.

ALL FIGURES REFLECT SALES THROUGH THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 1, 2004.



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Books



Author Adams
unmosqued

Pearl of a 'Harbor'

Lorraine Adams' extraordinary
debut traces Muslim immigrants in
America. by Jennifer Reese

Novel (Knopf, \$23.95)



Lorraine Adams's great, gutsy first novel, *Harbor*, homes in on the most demonized population in America: dodgy young Islamic men living in big East Coast cities. A haphazard group of Algerians come and go from a shabby communal apartment

near a Boston airport. Most are operating on the fringes of the law, and some, it becomes increasingly clear, far outside it. Who, this cool, compassionate novel asks, are these people?

As the book begins, Aziz, a 24-year-old Algerian stowaway fleeing the political violence of his homeland, stands on the deck of a tanker in Boston harbor, shivering and nearly blinded by the sun

after 52 days in the hold. He dives into the icy water, swims ashore, and launches himself on the city, clad in rags, bleeding, and unable to communicate. For the first two chapters, we see the world through Aziz's eyes and, like him, we have no idea where this desperate journey will end.

Then Aziz makes contact with an old acquaintance from Algeria, the slippery, charming Rafik, and almost instantly we're immersed in a boisterous, populous, and perceptive social novel. Aziz moves into Rafik's apartment, decorated with Madonna posters and photographs of the Tour de France.

Rafik introduces Aziz to his chubby American girlfriend, Heather, and to his business partner, the tricky, misogynistic Kamal. He takes Aziz to nightclubs to ogle women, plies him with drinks, and initiates him in the world of insurance fraud.

Aziz, the classic innocent abroad, soon finds himself at the center of a fluid group of Algerian immigrants, each pursuing different agendas. Aziz's brother Mourad turns up bearing a precious green card, lands a good job, and begins acquiring the trappings of a bourgeois

lifestyle. Educated, charismatic Ghazi, an architect by training, arrives shortly thereafter, a stowaway like Aziz. But America turns out to be no paradise for Ghazi, who washes dishes at a Mexican restaurant and begins suffering from depression, which he alleviates by watching Al Pacino movies and reading the Koran.

Adams offers shifting perspectives on these complex characters. Aziz sees Heather as the pampered daughter of a fabled "rich father." Later, we get a deeper, more rounded portrait of a sweet, malleable girl who unexpectedly falls in love with homely, serious Mourad. And toward the book's end, we glimpse Heather from the viewpoint of a jaded FBI agent: "She's a kid. Twenty-two, and not real smart, and a whiny voice..."

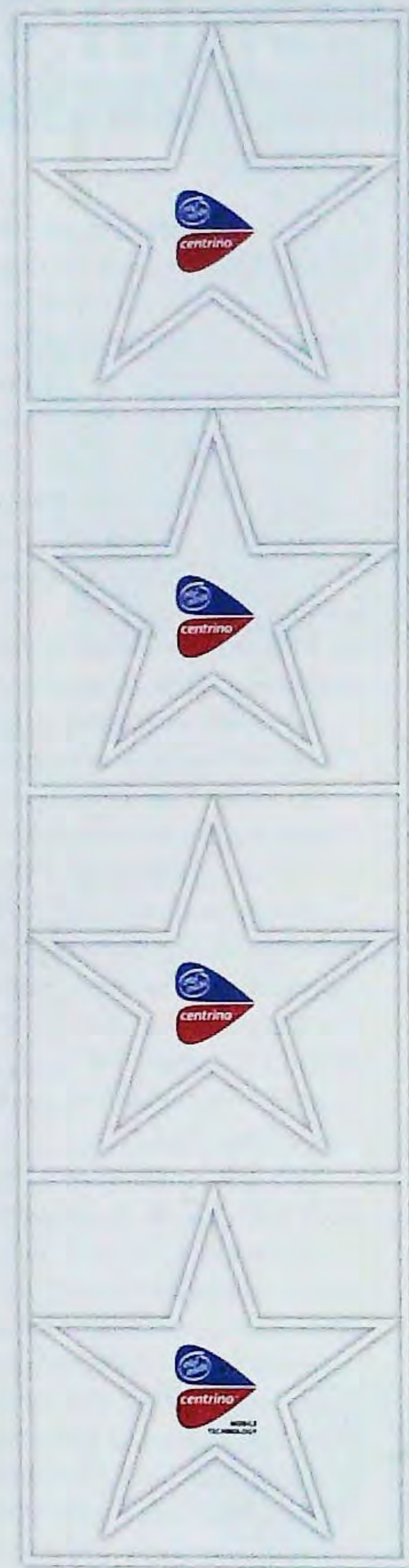
The late appearance of the FBI pulls the loose, generous story together. We've been inside this admittedly suspicious-looking group of mostly Muslim men, and now we draw back and observe the whole with all its many moving human parts and misunderstandings. The term "terrorist cell" has a chilly, clinical ring that keeps it divorced from the ambiguous, messy everyday lives we all live. In this outstanding novel, Adams decisively reestablishes the connection. **A**



Winner of the Week

MARGARET CHO

She'll pen a book for Riverhead tentatively titled *State of Emergency* that slams conservatism, racism, and lots of other isms. It's due in 2005, just in time to, well, miss the election completely.



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Books



WHEN THE NINES ROLL OVER

David Benioff
Stories (Viking, \$23.95)

Benioff may be best known as the screenwriter of Brad Pitt's homoerotic—sorry, Homeric—*Troy*, but don't hold that against him. When Benioff steers clear of Grecian formula, he's an ace storyteller. Following his debut novel, *The 25th Hour* (the basis for Spike Lee's underseen and underrated 2002 film), this mostly fantastic collection kick-starts with the masterful title story, in which a music exec cherry-picks a sexy punk singer for stardom against the wishes of her drummer boyfriend. "The Devil Comes to Orekhovo," about a trio of Russian soldiers on night patrol in Chechnya, may be the best Hemingway story Hemingway never wrote. And the wistful "Barefoot Girl in Clover"—an ex-jock's reminiscences about a romance he now realizes was the love of his life—could teach even the Greeks (if not Pitt) something about tragedy. **A-**—Chris Nashawaty

THE CLOUD GARDEN

Tom Hart Dyke and Paul Winder
Nonfiction (Lyons, \$22.95)

In early 2000, two twenty-something Brits—orchid expert Hart Dyke and avid adventurer Winder—did a very stupid thing. Ignoring vehement warnings, the pair trekked into the Darién Gap, a dense, unpoliced jungle straddling Panama and Colombia, where drug running and civil war are rampant. Sure enough, they were kidnapped by guerrillas. The authors take turns vividly recounting their scary, absurd ordeal, which was punctuated by boredom, tropical parasites, and frustration with the bumbling band of AK-47-toting youngsters who held them hostage

for nine months. "I found that my fear of death was subsiding," Hart Dyke writes. "Far worse to contemplate was these idiots getting their cash." The duo achieve a new kind of suspense—a tale in which their captors' names, their exact location, and their well-being matter less than getting the help out. **A**—Joshua Rich

COPIES IN SECONDS

David Owen
Nonfiction (Simon & Schuster, \$24)



It was the size of a big desk and weighed 648 pounds. It was manufactured by the tiny Haloid Company (which later became Xerox), based in Rochester, N.Y. Called the 914 Office Copier, it was the first modern photocopying machine, and its introduction in March 1960 did no less than change the world. The series of inventions and technological triumphs that led to what Owen calls "the biggest communication breakthrough since Gutenberg" came from the singular vision and perseverance of one Chester Carlson. Both the tale (including the heartrending poverty of his youth) and Owen's unfettered appreciation for his subject make for a fascinating read that, unlike the purpose of these machines, is not easily duplicated. **B+**—Wook Kim

HAD A GOOD TIME

Robert Olen Butler
Stories (Grove, \$23)



Vintage postcards adorned with rustic landscapes, spooning young lovers, and wish-you-were-here greetings are the jumping-off point for this uneven but affecting series of vignettes of early-20th-century America. Sometimes the tone is wryly comic, as in "The Ironworkers' Hayride," where a shy accountant and a woman with a wooden leg express romantic longing in a discussion of female suffrage and Halley's comet. Occasionally, Butler strains for contemporary relevance: In "The One in White," a brief flirtation between a Mexican laundress and an American reporter during a U.S. military incursion comes off as a too-obvious allegory of not-so-innocent abroad. Yet in the standout "Carl and I," a librarian reaches out to her consumptive, dying husband with clear-eyed, aching poignancy. **B+**—Ben Spier

WAITING FOR TEDDY WILLIAMS

Howard Frank Mosher
Novel (Houghton Mifflin, \$24)



As a Red Sox fan—and one who delighted in Jason Varitek's pounding of pretty boy Alex Rodriguez the other week—I should have enjoyed *Waiting*. It's fast-paced, steeped in New England lore, and it follows a young Vermont lad on his way to the World Series with the Sox—and reconciliation with his dad. But Mosher's book ultimately is a swing-and-miss, a mishmash of olde tyme tropes that in its better moments recalls the baseball pulps of the '40s and '50s, and in its worst, a rejected screenplay for *Field of Dreams*. For kids: **B+** For adults: **C**—Daniel Fierman

LOST SOULS

Michael Collins
Mystery (Viking, \$23.95)

Lawrence is a small-town cop with the usual litany of literary small-town-cop problems: an



unfriendly ex-wife, a disconnected kid, and a love of the bottle. When a 3-year-old girl is found dead, the victim of a hit-and-run, Lawrence becomes involved in both the investigation and a cover-up that, as must happen in literary small towns, tears the community apart. Collins is a gifted writer—sparse and elegant in his prose, unsentimental about his rough and damaged characters. When the story remains focused on the protagonists, it stays on track; the mystery, however, never rises above the cliché that people, even in small towns, aren't always what they seem. **B**—Rebecca Ascher-Walsh

BODY DOUBLE

Tess Gerritsen
Thriller (Ballantine, \$24.95)



Dr. Maura Isles, the chilly medical examiner introduced in last year's *The Sinner*, is back! And she's got a hot twin! Who's...dead. Isles returns home from a business trip

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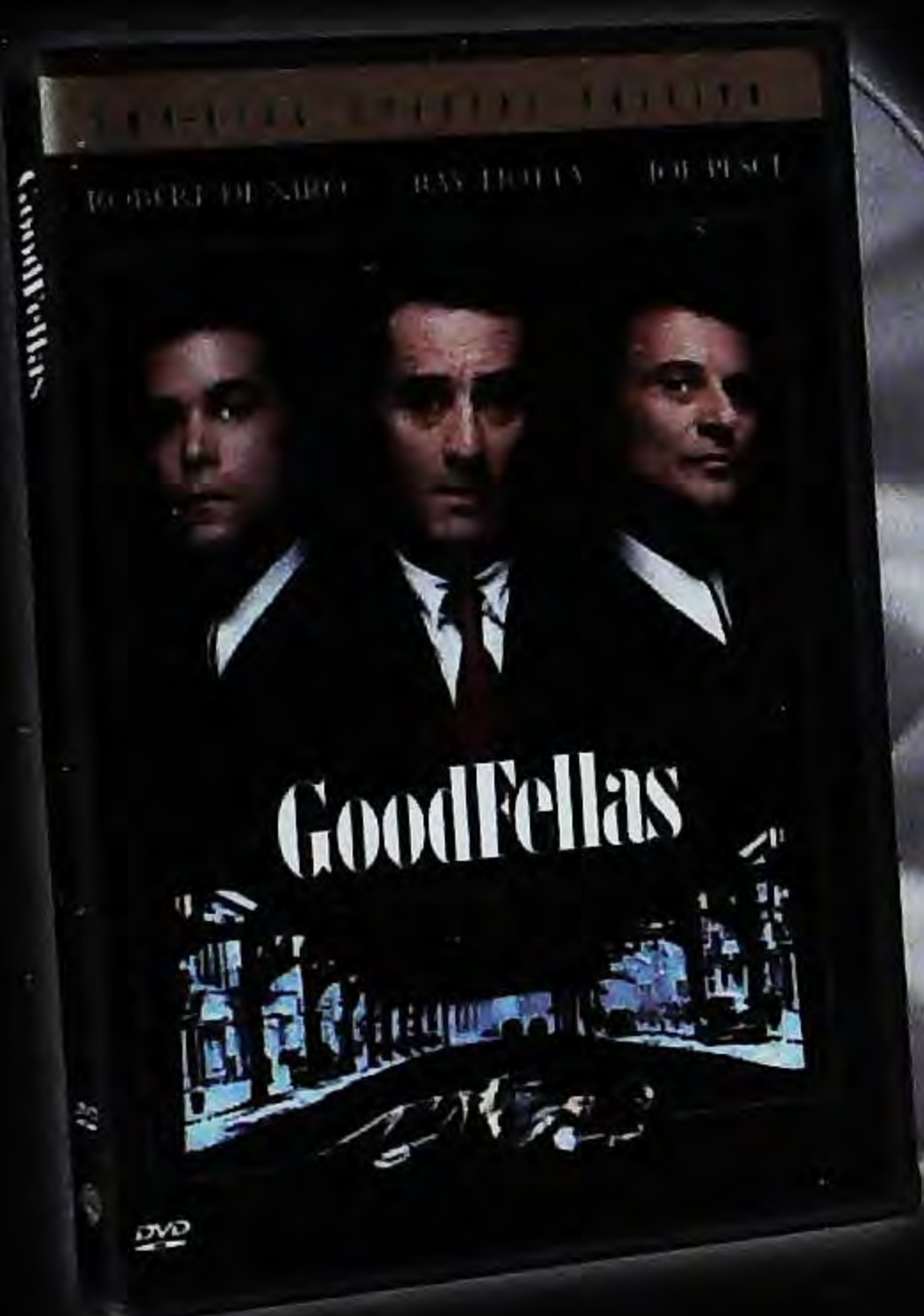
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Books

to discover the body of the dopelgänger she never knew she had. Turns out the siblings may be the offspring of a convicted murderess. The story zips along, introducing the abduction of a pregnant woman and a delightfully bizarre plot twist. But the face-offs between Isles and her killer mom—which should have smacked of *The Silence of the Lambs*—fall flat. *Body* works the brain a bit, but unfortunately leaves the nerves intact. **B-**—*Gillian Flynn*

VALVERDE'S GOLD

Mark Honigsbaum
Nonfiction (FSG, \$25)



Deep inside the most inhospitable stretch of the Ecuadorian Andes, an unimaginable bounty of hidden Incan gold and silver sits waiting to be taken—or maybe it's already gone, or maybe it never existed. A centuries-old guide written by a Spanish conquistador named Valverde reveals the only known path to the treasure—but it turns cryptic just as the gold seems within reach.

Such are the gripping mysteries and half-truths that goad Honigsbaum, a tenacious scholar, to mine every possible vein in his story. He describes fascinating treasure seekers, including a fiery Ecuadorian rancher and a cultured German miner, who endure relentless icy rain and the forbidding terrain's razor-sharp bamboo. *Valverde's Gold* reveals all you'd need to seek the cache yourself, but after reading this harrowing account, you'll probably just want to search your couch for loose change. **B+**—*Adam B. Vary*

FRUIT

Brian Francis
Novel (MacAdam/Cage, \$23)



Peter Paddington is a 13-year-old, fat, gay cross-dresser with two selfish, annoying older sisters and an overbearing mother. But his biggest problem is that his nipples keep threatening, cajoling, and teasing him—out loud (or so he thinks). Francis' absurd, charming debut superbly portrays Peter's inner life: his delu-

sions, dalliances with religion, fantasies about a hairy-armed gym teacher, and fascination with Brooke Shields (hey, it's 1984 after all). Once the action leaves Peter's chest, the supporting characters are a bit broad and unformed. Mom starts the book as a menopausal nut who won't make a left turn, and then morphs into a weepy guilt-tripper; Pop is practically MIA. Just follow Peter's lead and ignore them: *Fruit* is sweet, tart, and forbidden in all the right places. **B+**—*Henry Goldblatt*



Mina majors in hard-boiled mysteries

DECEPTION

Denise Mina
Mystery (Little, Brown, \$23.95)



Lachlan Harriot—ex-doctor, househusband, and father—narrates the tale of his wife, Susie, a forensic psychologist who was recently convicted of murdering both her patient, a serial killer named Andrew Gow, and Gow's wife Donna. Initially seeking to prove Susie's innocence, Lachlan combs through her letters, e-mails, and clinical notes to discover layers of (good title) deception. That quality also extends to Lachlan himself, who

proves a neurotically unreliable narrator harboring his own furtive obsessions, including sex with the family nanny and (a joke that's not really a joke) an excessive fondness for marzipan. Glaswegian novelist Mina—as though feeling liberated from her highly praised yet assiduously downbeat Garnethill trilogy—has written a stand-alone shocker that's exhilarating in its energetic, witty sordidness. **A-**—*Ken Tucker*

CLOUD ATLAS

David Mitchell
Novel (Random House, \$14.95)



In the hectic universe of Mitchell's third novel, the "Cloud Atlas" sextet is a musical piece for overlapping soloists; its colorful ne'er-do-well composer explains to a friend that each solo is interrupted by its successor and recontinues in turn. Then he asks: "Revolutionary or gimmicky?" Oh, mostly gimmicky, judging by the identically structured novel at hand, which finds six stories in search of a proper telling (a feverish and Melvillean tale of the 19th-century seas, the obscure composer's cuckolding adventures in 1930s Belgium, the deposition of a rebellious clone in some sinister future, etc.). Mitchell's talents for riotous incident and energetic prose keep the pages turning, but *Atlas'* disparate strands are linked only by the flimsiest of pretenses—for instance, the composer discovers a portion of the ocean tale on the bookshelves of his host. The six cylinders never function as one engine. **B**—*Troy Patterson*



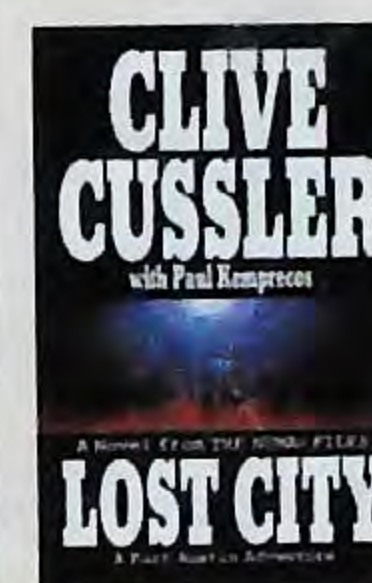
FROM OUR STAFF Intrigued by the mingling of music and extreme sports, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY critic David Browne (left) crisscrossed the country for three years to talk to competitive skateboarders, BMX bikers, snowboarders, and freestyle motocross riders. In *Amped: How Big*

Air, Big Dollars, and a New Generation Took Sports to the Extreme (Bloomsbury, \$24.95), he traces each X-sport from renegade beginnings to a growing (and increasingly lucrative) popularity. He found that up-and-coming extreme athletes often now face a quandary—to sell out or not to sell out?—which mirrors that of your typical rock band. "I was interested in what amounts to the indie rock of sports," says Browne. "They are to regular sports what Elvis was to big-band pop of the '50s." —*Gilbert Cruz*

AMPED



Best-Sellers



CLIVE'S LABORS, 'LOST'
After discovering a life-prolonging enzyme deep underwater, researchers start getting killed. There's also the problem of the pesky mutant seaweed. But Kurt Austin saves the day in *Lost City*, the fifth in Clive Cussler's NUMA Files series (with Paul Kemprecos), which debuts on the fiction chart at No. 3.

FICTION

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	THE DA VINCI CODE Dan Brown, Doubleday, \$24.95	71
2	SKINNY DIP Carl Hiaasen, Knopf, \$24.95	3
3	LOST CITY Clive Cussler with Paul Kemprecos, Putnam, \$26.95	1
4	R IS FOR RICOCHET Sue Grafton, Putnam, \$26.95	3
5	THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN Mitch Albom, Hyperion, \$19.95	44
6	THE RULE OF FOUR Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason, Dial, \$24.95	12
7	SAM'S LETTERS TO JENNIFER James Patterson, Little, Brown, \$24.95	5
8	TEN BIG ONES Janet Evanovich, St. Martin's, \$25.95	6
9	THE DARK TOWER VI: SONG OF SUSANNAH Stephen King, Donald M. Grant/Scribner, \$30	8
10	ANGELS & DEMONS Dan Brown, Atria, \$19.95	31

NONFICTION

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	MY LIFE Bill Clinton, Knopf, \$35	6
2	THE SOUTH BEACH DIET Arthur Agatston, M.D., Rodale, \$24.95	68
3	EATS, SHOTS & LEAVES Lynne Truss, Gotham, \$17.50	16
4	SHADOW DIVERS Robert Kurson, Random House, \$26.95	5
5	THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE Rick Warren, Zondervan, \$19.99	78
6	DRESS YOUR FAMILY IN GORDUROY AND DENIM David Sedaris, Little, Brown, \$24.95	9
7	PROPHECY Sylvia Browne with Lindsay Harrison, Dutton, \$23.95	2
8	THE SOUTH BEACH DIET COOKBOOK Arthur Agatston, M.D., Rodale, \$25.95	16
9	IMPERIAL HUBRIS Anonymous, Brassey's, \$27.50	3
10	THE AUTOMATIC MILLIONAIRE David Bach, Broadway, \$19.95	20

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, WEEK OF JULY 26-AUG. 1, 2004

OPENING ACTS

"She stepped across the room and pushed closed the dresser drawers until they all lay even. The house seemed to hold its breath as she turned with her mouth pinched down and her chin trembling so fast she could not have been controlling it. The boy watched her and felt as if he'd swallowed a bit of metal—a washer or a coin—and someone was bringing it back up along his spine with a magnet." —From the opening chapter of William Lychack's debut novel, *THE WASP EATER* (Houghton Mifflin, \$21)

"'Nick around?' the driver asked. 'Sorry. You missed him,' I said, still looking at the ground. 'He just left eight years ago.'" —From the first chapter of Merrill Markoe and Andy Priebay's novel *THE PSYCHO EX GAME* (Villard, \$24.95)

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The Four-Star Follies

BY STEPHEN KING

I LOVE THE MOVIES, LET'S GET THAT UP FRONT. HAVE SINCE I WAS a kid. And I'm from an unsophisticated school of thought that believes a movie (always a movie and never a film, even if it comes with subtitles) should be fun before it's anything else: an ice cream cone for the brain. Because of this I especially like the summer season, when the studios shoot off so many of their big fireworks. And usually I have fun, because it doesn't take a lot to please me. I mostly go to be *entertained*, not to learn the meaning of life.

That doesn't make me—or the millions of moviegoers like me—dumb. I can revel in Glenn Close's bitchy, over-the-top performance in *The Stepford Wives* and still realize that the movie is mostly incoherent, although amiable and well-meant. I can enjoy Brian Cox as Agamemnon—and be blown away by Peter O'Toole's melancholy Priam—in *Troy* without believing Brad Pitt as Achilles in the slightest. I can easily set aside the wacky science in *The Day After Tomorrow* and still point to the scene in which Jake Gyllenhaal dives under the rising water in the New York Public Library to use the old-fashioned pay telephone as my absolute favorite of the current season. (Honorable mention: Denzel Washington chewing a mind-control capsule out of a guy's back in *The Manchurian Candidate*.)

There's nothing wrong with having fun, and I sneer at people who sneer at summer movies—in fact, I sneer at people who sneer at entertainment for entertainment's sake. I feel sorry for them, too. Riding that high horse has got to be uncomfortable, especially with a stick up your butt.

Still, there's been a steady critical grade deflation—what could even be called four-star fever—that makes me uncomfortable when I page through the entertainment section of *The New York Times*. Here ads for major studio movies now routinely appear trailing kite tails of critical superlatives, and not just from the usual suspects such as Earl "I'll Praise Anyone" Dittman or Rex "If No One Else Liked It I Did" Reed. No, now it's Richard Corliss of *TIME*, Claudia Puig of *USA Today*, Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone*, and a dozen other formerly reliable critics who seem to have gone remarkably soft—not to say softhearted and sometimes softheaded—in their old age. Even Roger Ebert, that fierce partisan of the movies, all too often seems to have one thumb up and one thumb up his...aw, never mind.

Do I want America's critics to pan good movies? The hell I do; I'm the guy who likes almost all of 'em, remember? Or likes even the worst of them a little (Vin Diesel's tireless glare in *The Chronicles of Riddick*, for example). All I want is for critics to stop giving four

stars—or even three—to two-star movies. In my book there have been 4 four-star movies already this summer (*Shrek 2*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *The Manchurian Candidate*), and four's a feast. What's wrong with saying that the rest (with the exception of the odious *Van Helsing*, which *did* have the salubrious effect of making even *Catwoman* look good) are perfectly acceptable summer time-passers and let it go at that?

I mean, look here—is *Spider-Man 2* really a four-star movie? I

love Sam Raimi's work and feel the same way about Michael Chabon's (Chabon had a hand in creating *2's* screen story), but I wince at the idea of putting this movie in the same critical category as *The Godfather* and *Unforgiven*. Sure, I loved those dizzying shots of Spidey swinging through the steel canyons of the city. Of course I loved Doc Ock clomping his way up the side of a skyscraper (while not believing the narrative source of those tentacles in the slightest). But let's be real. The emotional core of this story is a girl who's in a snit because her boyfriend keeps missing her play. And just what's the deal with that show, anyhow? I can see a revival of *The Importance of Being Earnest* for the senior class play at Centerville High somewhere in Nebraska, but on Broadway? That's harder to believe than Dr. Octavius welding tentacles to his back in the computer age.

I passed a perfectly enjoyable evening at *Spider-Man 2*—the night it opened, in fact, and the theater was crammed to the rafters with equally appreciative Spidey fans. But I remember Sam Raimi's first feature film, the no-budget *Evil Dead*, which premiered at the Cannes film festival in 1981, when Sam was so young he looked more like a waiter in a Catskills summer resort than an auteur. That was before million-dollar CGI effects, and when Sam wanted to do his version of Steadicam, he

simply bolted his camera to a beam. Then he and a couple of friends grabbed the beam and ran like hell. It was crude, but it worked.

When you looked at *Evil Dead*, you knew you were looking at low-budget. When you look at *Spider-Man 2*, you know you're looking not just at high-budget but at top-end Hollywood Humvee budget. Nothing wrong with that, either. But *Evil Dead* had a raw and horrifying beauty that has stayed with me for 23 years, and in my mind that makes it a *true* four-star movie. *Spider-Man 2*? Very cool, but I doubt if I'll be able to remember many of the details by the time next June rolls around with a new load of summer pix. But that's okay, because—like *Troy*; *Dodgeball*; *I, Robot*; and *The Day After Tomorrow*—it's a pretty good movie. ■



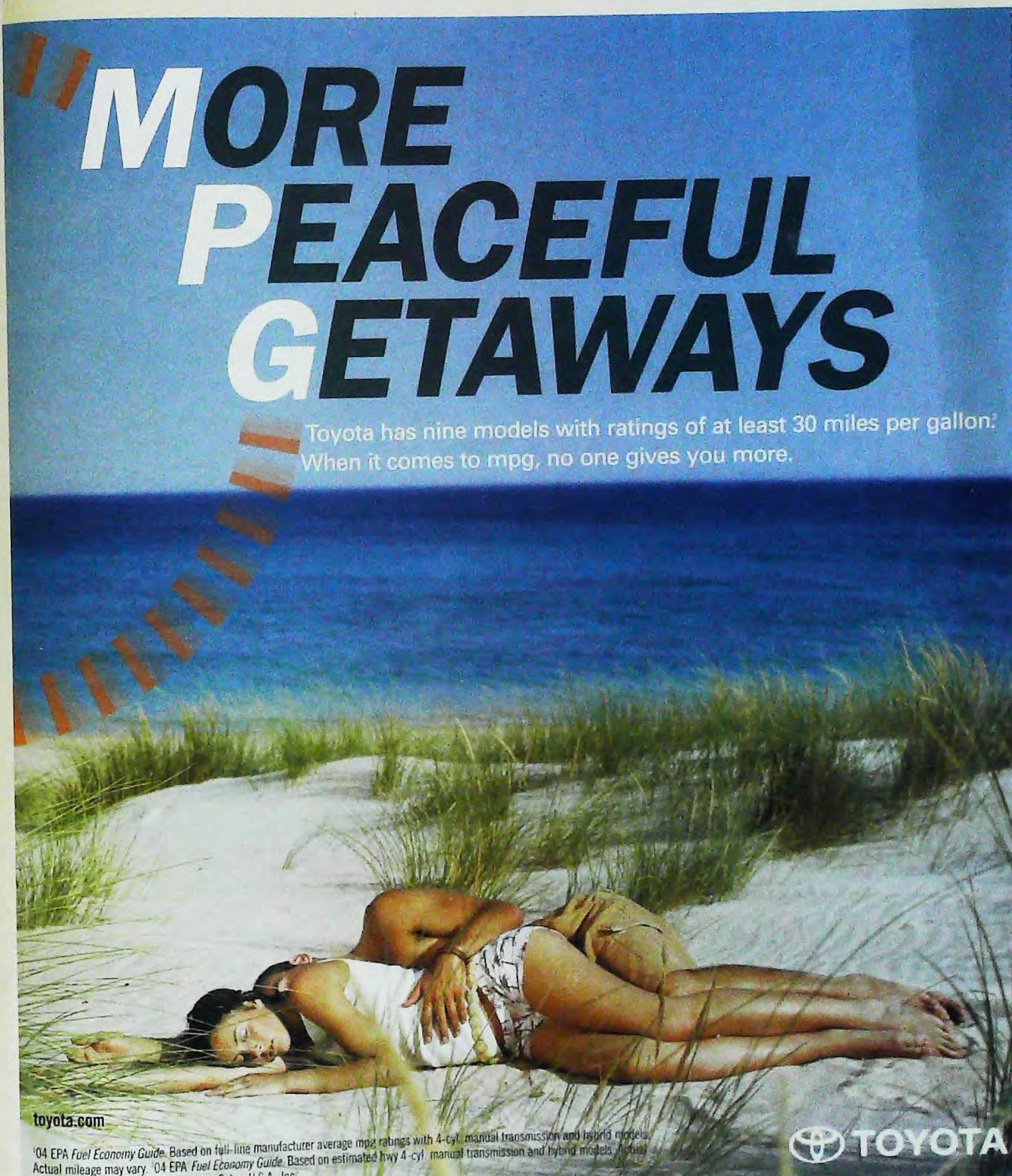
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